

Sermons Preached by the Rev. Raymond Shaheen, D. D.

<u>Year: 1958</u>	<u>SERMON TITLE</u>	<u>TEXT</u>
January 18	"The Christian Mind"	Romans 12: 16
February 2	"That Ye May Obtain"	Corinthians 9: 24
February 16	"...The Greatest"	Corinthians 13: 13
February 23	"Habakkuk"	Habakkuk
March 16	"Jonah"	Jonah
March 23	"Hosea"	Hosea
March 30	"On The Meaning Of Easter"	Matthew 26: 58
April 20	"As Sheep Who Stray"	I Peter 2: 25
April 27	"The Christian Answer"	I Peter 2: 25
May 4	"The Spirit Of Truth"	John 16: 13
May 11	"No Greater Responsibility"	Luke 2
May 15	"Mission Accomplished"	Acts
May 18	"As Good Stewards"	I Peter 4: 10
May 29	Gettysburg Seminary Graduation	
June 22	"Perfect Love"	I John 4: 17
June 29	"When God Breaks Through"	Acts 12: 7
July 6	"An Obligation Under God"	Psalms 67: 1-2
August 24	"Who To Deal With Religious Doubt"	John 1: 46
August 31	"Samaritan With A Halo"	Luke 10: 33
September 21	"A Man Named Matthew"	Matthew 9: 9

September 28	"A Philosophy From Prison"	Ephesians 4: 1
<u>1958- continued</u>	<u>SERMON TITLE</u>	<u>TEXT</u>
October 26	Reformation Sunday	
November 2	"Christian Essentials"	Philippians 1: 9-11
November 9	"Colony Of Heaven"	Philippians 1: 9-11
November 30	"Journey Into Christmas"	Luke 2: 15
December 7	"Repentant Pilgrim"	Corinth. 5: 10

SERMONS - 1958
PASTOR SHAHEEN

SAINT LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 18, 1958	"THE CHRISTIAN MIND"	Romans 12:16
February 2, 1958	"THAT YE MAY OBTAIN . . ."	Corinthians 9:24
February 16, 1958	" . . . THE GREATEST"	Corinthians 13:13
February 23, 1958	"HABAKKUK"	Habakkuk
March 16, 1958	"JONAH"	Jonah
March 23, 1958	"HOSEA"	Hosea
March 30, 1958	"ON THE MEANING OF EASTER"	Matthew 26:58
April 20, 1958	"AS SHEEP WHO STRAY"	I Peter 2:25
April 27, 1958	"THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER"	I Peter 2:15
May 4, 1958	"THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH"	John 16:13
May 11, 1958	"NO GREATER RESPONSIBILITY"	Luke 2
May 15, 1958	"MISSION ACCOMPLISHED" (Ascension Day)	Acts
May 18, 1958	"AS GOOD STEWARDS"	I Peter 4:10
June 15, 1958	"ON THE MAKING OF EXCUSES"	Luke 14:18
June 22, 1958	"PERFECT LOVE"	I John 4:17
June 29, 1958	"WHEN GOD BREAKS THROUGH"	Acts 12:7
July 6, 1958	"AN OBLIGATION UNDER GOD"	Psalms 67:1-2
August 24, 1958	"HOW TO DEAL WITH RELIGIOUS DOUBT"	John 1:46
August 31, 1958	"SAMARITAN WITH A HALO"	Luke 10:33
September 21, 1958	"A MAN NAMED MATTHEW"	Matt. 9:9
September 28, 1958	"A PHILOSOPHY FROM PRISON"	Eph. 4:1
October 26, 1958	(Reformation Sunday)	
November 2, 1958	"CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS"	Phil. 1:9-11
November 9, 1958	"COLONY OF HEAVEN"	Phil. 3:20
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1/19/58

The Sermon entitled "THE CHRISTIAN MIND" is based upon the Epistle for the day. The text is a portion of the 16th verse of the 12th Chapter of the Letter to the Romans. "Be of the same mind, one toward another". What would you say, my friends, is perhaps the most important single problem confronting most of us? It could be that you would say this whole matter of getting to know God better and trying to ascertain what is His will for my life. It could also be that you might say without undue hesitation, that the great problem confronting mankind is learning how to live with one another. An English writer, just before the close of World War II, said in one of the articles he had prepared for publication, "Well shortly now the war will be over, the last shot will have been fired, WHAT THEN? We will settle down to the age old problem of trying to live with one another". The problem is ever with us. If this should be true for you, and I frankly admit that it is true for me, it is not immodest for me to say this to you, that it could be that this Sermon could be very helpful, TO YOU.

Let me tell you a bit about the background of the text. The Apostle Paul, the itinerant preacher, had gone to community to community; he had known the great joy of establishing one congregation after another; he had hoped for the day when he could go to Rome. We call it The Eternal City. Perhaps with a measure of selfish pride he would want to know for himself the honor of establishing a congregation in that City, in the name of Jesus Christ. But that was not to be his lot in life. Before he could get to Rome the Gospel had been carried there by other people. Maybe folks had heard him preach in Corinth (?). In some of the cities of Asia Minor, people that he had never met, having heard the Gospel either through him or by somebody else had gone to Rome and established a congregation. Let's pause there for a moment parenthetically. Think of it. The church established in Rome by people who must be listed among the great unknown, who had carried the Gospel and nowhere is their name recorded. Well Paul knew that there was a church there and if he couldn't establish it himself then at least he would allow them to know that he had a great concern for them and he hoped someday to visit them. Now it looks as though he will not be able to get there, so he

does the next best thing. He writes them a letter. That's not a very easy assignment; to write a letter to people you have never seen who live in a place you have never visited. But the letter that Paul writes kept for us in this treasury of the Good Word has sometimes been catalogued as one of the most significant of all his writing, and there are those who tell us that perhaps it is the most theologically valuable of letters that he wrote. Now don't run away from that, don't let that frighten you. You say your no theologian, you say that you are not much interested in theology, well stick with it a bit longer. There is plenty in this letter to the Romans that you can't possibly misunderstand. Because in the light of all the churches he established, in view of the fact that he might not know anybody in Rome, he knew there were people in Rome. Maybe he kept saying to himself, People are People, regardless of where they are to be found;; and in view of his experience that he had with other people, remembering the problems that had come to him from all the other congregations that he had established, with that as a background he writes this letter to the Christians at Rome and then as you read along, chapter by chapter, you come to these words that Again I say you can't possibly misunderstand. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, weep with them that weep. If people should persecute you, if people should curse you. Yes that's happened, hasn't it. Well Paul says to people who treat you like that, bless them, be kindly affectionate one toward the other, let love be without dissimulation, be of the same mind one toward another. Yes we can understand and that is precisely the problem for most of us. We know that the Christian precept is that a man should look upon his brother with love in his heart. That's what troubles us, we can understand that. As someone has said so often you see that wit, it isn't the world, it's the people. How to get along with them. In fact, Dr. Moffett (J) feels it so strongly that he translates this text in this manner. Learn to live in harmony with each other and that's our problem.

May I tell you this. That for the most ^{part} ~~times~~, I don't have any trouble getting along with God. There are times/when you see that I can handle Him by keeping Him safe

at a distance. There are times when I talk to Him. I talk to Him, not with Him. I can put blinders on my eyes and I can talk only about the things I want to see and I can talk only about the things that I deem important, and I can just keep on talking and keep on talking and never give Him a chance. Yes I must admit I can get along with God because when I get along with Him it is usually through a private session. I am not one to invite other people in to listen. And then I have the feeling that what I tell Him I have told Him and nobody else hears, and if per chance I should be courteous enough to allow Him to have part of the conversation what he tells me I may likewise keep pretty much to myself. May be nobody else will ever know what God's marching orders are to me. Yes I can get along with God, but to get along with God's people, where my life becomes somewhat an open book, where people know that I work with so and so and other people in the office know how unpleasant it is, where other people know that I deem my neighbor obstreperous. And I get up in the morning and the house is still there and the neighbor is still there, and I live on that same street. This

me you see. I can get along with God, but to get along with God's people, to get along with other folks, that's my problem. Is this the earnest of your soul? Would this be your frank admission? I' say to you once more, I do not deem it immodest for me to say that you could find this sermon helpful. Here is the admonition of the Apostle Paul, a man who had the right to speak. And if we want to be Christians we are in duty bound to give him a hearing. Having ministered to one congregation to another, having constantly dealt with people, he says to the Christians in Rome as though he were writing his last letter. "Be of the same mind one toward another, live in harmony with people". Now let me ask the question that should be raised - What is this Mind by which we ought to deal with one another? What is the distinctive Christian Mind, which becomes the norm and the standard for our relationship with other people. If I understand the mind of Jesus Christ, if I understand the mind of Apostle Paul, I will now for you what seems to me the characteristic of the Christian Mind. In the first place the Christian Mind is the mind ^{that} ~~which~~ is fashioned in this way

The mind of an individual who constantly remembers that God deals graciously with him - period. The Christian Mind is the man who is always saying to himself, I am a sinner - and despite my sin - because of my sin - God has sent Jesus Christ in the world to redeem me a lost creature. That's exactly what I am and when God sees me that way, God Loves Me, God remains constant, he is never less than gone, he is always dealing graciously with me. It is at that point that the Christian Mind is formulated - for man has no right to call himself Christian who does not constantly endeavor to remember, that God through Jesus Christ loves him - sinner as he is. That's what the Christian Mind remembers. Then the Christian Mind remembering this - recognizes the fact that God deals that way with other people too. I have no monopoly upon God's love and his grace. If God loves me - God loves my brother - if God deals graciously with me - God deals graciously with my brother, just as much. God never loves me at my brother's expense. This love of God is constant, always and everywhere the same. Therefore, the Christian Mind, remembering that God deals this way with him as an individual, recognizes the fact that God also deals that way with his brother. And then that forces the Christian Mind, to level off in this area - remembering what God does for me and recognizing the fact that God offers the same grace to my brother and deals with him in that way - Therefore, I must treat my brother as God treats me, as God treats him, and this is the Christian Mind. To be motivated, to be compelled, to look upon my brother as I know God looked upon me - and as I must admit God looks upon him. This is the mind of Christ and this mind should be enough or we have no right to claim the name of Christian. Be honest with me, friend - isn't this the place where our Christian ethics - our pattern for behavior bogs down?

We are perfectly content to with God dealing graciously with me, and if my brother wants to work out some salvation that way with God - this is his business - but I don't know whether he has or not, but when I come to deal with him - I become judge and jury. I form my opinions, I pass down a sentence as it seems good to me and that's the lamentable thing about human nature, we set ourselves up in judgment upon other people and judgment is the prerogative of God. When you come to especially with the estate of a man's soul. I remember once hearing a man saying in indignation - words quite like these. I hope I shall not forget them - and what is more I hope I may not forget my

reaction to his words. The man had been maltreated, of that there is no question. One person after another had taken advantage of him. He seemed always to have been short changed and in utter indignation he cried out "I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL JUDGMENT DAY! Then justice will be done" - The first thing that I want God to do is to meet justice to these men who have wronged me. And I thank God for the reaction that came to my mind. Justice, that is the last thing I want from God - I a sinner, I who disobey, I who fail to do so much that I could do, I who refuse to allow God to empower me with His Grace, I would rather go it alone. The last things I want from God is Justice. The first thing I want from Him is MERCY. But that's human nature for you - we become judge and jury - we take other people to task in a way that we ourselves would never want to be taken to task, says the Apostle Paul - "Be of the same mind, one toward another" - be possessed by this Christian Mind - God Loves You - God saves you through Jesus Christ. Nothing that you could do, could ever deserve it - and God does that for your brother just as well. Therefore, on that basis treat your brother as God treats you. This is the Christian Life (?), one hand up to God being sustained by Him. Then that love flowing out through me - somebody else. This would be a very convenient spot on which to close this Sermon, but because I know my own soul as well as I do, I think I know something about the inner lining of your heart. Your saying, could be all right - if everyone were Christians - t'would be all right if I could be assured that everyone would react that way, then I would be willing to have the same mine, if I knew that he possessed the same mind. Well Paul is talking to Christians. He says that's the point at which to begin. If you want to take the name of Christ you have no choice. You may not be able to determine the course that your brother may take - you must begin with yourself. This I would say to you - Who Knows? Maybe the whole atmosphere would change ~~and begin to take your que from~~ ~~from God the Great Director~~ - where its so unpleasant now - it may be you as one individual, would change and begin to take your que from God the Great Director, just as there was harmony in the orchestra when everyone turned first to the director. Don't wait for somebody else to turn - begin with yourself. I think I have God's word for it - its worth the trial - how else can you explain the life of Jesus Christ?

February 2, 1958

" ***** That ye may obtain *****

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is based on the Epistle for the day. It is entitled " * * * That ye may obtain." The text is the 24th Verse of the 9th Chapter of First Corinthians: Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.

Preachers sometimes are wont to get the text for their sermons in strange places. Not every sermon is born in the cloister. Not every sermon may come to a man upon bended knee.

It could well be, dare that we think it, that here was the Apostle Paul, that keen observer of human nature, perhaps mending some tents in a village square, seeing the young athlete of the village prancing so vigorously down the thoroughfare. And as we were led to believe by tradition, the Apostle Paul had a frail, haggard body, never vigorous or of robot (?) strength. Maybe as he looked upon this man he could not help but admire and appreciate the very health-tone of all that he was. He watched him with a body well-nigh perfect, every muscle perfectly toned. And then he thought to himself, How did he get that way? This is the result of discipline. This is the result of training. And he must have thought to himself, Well, if a man gets that way because he trains, if a man gets that way as the result of discipline, why don't we Christians take a page from the book of the athlete -- and there a sermon was begun:

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain." That is, so make ready for the race that having been prepared you could win; the victor's wreath could be yours. Or so, it would seem to me.

On another occasion the Apostle Paul going from village to village comes to the village where in the village square there is a monument erected, not to a military hero, not to some benefactor of the community, but this monument for a chap who from this town went out to run in the Olympics and came back the winner. The town had pro-

duced a victorious one and they would not easily forget it. And as he looked at that monument, remembering that he had received the victor's wreath, a twisted wreath of olive leaves that soon would fade away, he thought to himself: Why, he prepared for that race. One strenuous week after another of discipline. What did he get? A victor's wreath that would fade and wither? If a man will so prepare to run a race here to bring back to his community a victor's wreath that is as _____, can be destroyed, can fade, can wither, why you Christians, yours is the race for eternal life. How much more so then ought ye to prepare to keep your body and your soul under discipline that you should get the victor's wreath!

Well, he could not forget it. He wove it into a sermon. Chances are he used the illustration again and again -- it is a good one, you see -- and even when he wrote the Christians in Corinth he had to incorporate it in the letter he wrote. This matter of life is but a conflict; life is but a battle to be fought; life has a course to be run, and as a man gives himself against that hour of victory, perhaps so a Christian ought to prepare, so a Christian ought to live, so he shall obtain the victor's wreath.

Now with that as a background I come to you this morning, to this sacred desk, to destroy, if I may, an illustration that _____ hard. There are some people, for whatever reason it may be, I cannot say, who permit themselves to think that the life just happens; or that one just goes on record saying he wants to be Christian, and that is all there is to it.

No athlete ever wins a race by simply registering for the race. No athlete ever becomes victorious simply by saying, I should like to run that race; I should like to be a participant; you may count me in. Well, if that is all he would do, you can count him out, ere the sun would set! But for some reason or another there is an illusion on the part of some people that all that one has to do in the Christian life is to begin the race under some noble impulse, to go on record, and that the rest will happen automatically and just takes care of itself. Going back to the page from the athlete's book, he wins no race by simply registering or going on record.

I think the Christian Church is sadly beset by countless numbers of people --

and the figure is that great -- by countless numbers of people who think that the full Christian life may be theirs simply by taking a stand at one particular time in their life. What would happen if the athlete simply registered? What would happen if the athlete simply kept training for one day out of one week? Simply kept training for one day out of one month? For one day out of one year.

I think there are those who think the Christian life can be won that way, and at the end that they shall be automatically given the victor's wreath. The Apostle Paul says, It is not so, and common sense should dictate to you and to me that nothing eminently worthwhile ever comes to us of its own accord. There must be effort. There must be discipline. There must be concern (?). The only thing in this world that ever propels itself on its own is something that is going down hill. And yet in this matter of the Christian life there are those who think ^{that} you take a stand, you face yourself toward Heaven and then it just happens.

The Apostle Paul had a right to speak. He uses a figure of speech of the athlete -- discipline; self-mastery. The Apostle Paul had a right to speak. He knew human nature, and he wants each of us also to recognize that the Christian life is a life of combat. It is a battle in which you must be engaged for the cause of Jesus Christ. He says, I am involved in a conflict --

And would you allow me to stop at that point? It doesn't behoove any of us to search and to probe another man's heart; that prerogative belongs to Jesus Christ. But if there is some kind of that could see into the very depth of your mind, your heart and your soul, what would it reveal? ~~again~~ Against what are you fighting? What is the great conflict that claims your concern and for which you would prepare yourself as would an able warrior? A man sometimes is judged not only by what the thing may be for which he stands, but also by the stand that he takes against something.

That's what it sounded like!

They tell me in the *(narrow corner)* of the book written by Somerset Maugham there is a character who is made to speak ~~these~~ words like these: Whenever I see anyone who suffers an injury, and the person who causes that man injury goes scot free,

I must become involved in the conflict. I must find myself fighting against something.

What are you fighting against? What is the thing against which you would do battle? Well, you may follow Paul's figure of speech where the athlete prepared to run a course, or one who says, So fight I. Not as one who goes about as uncertainly (?), but as one who knows that there is a battle to be waged and a victory to be gained.

The older I become, the more I am convinced of the terrible reality that the Christian life calls for constant effort and . No one will drift automatically to the gateway of Heaven. You will not just casually find yourself outside the Great Gate. Even so great a saint as the Apostle Paul has to admit in the Epistle lesson read this morning: Lest I myself should be a cast away. The Apostle Paul recognizes the fact that even in this course of the Christian life, he could lose.

You are perfectly right -- every Sunday you hear the presiding minister say, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But don't think for a single minute that doesn't imply that the believer lives the life of a believer, and that the believer is doing daily battle for Jesus Christ.

There are three things, it seems to me, that come to our minds quickly when we think of this text. The Christian life, as the athlete or the warrior, is engaged in something that requires discipline and self-mastery. I don't know how you look upon your coming here on a Sunday morning. I look upon you in a number of different ways when I ask God to discharge me with a measure of courage and compassion and wisdom when I share with you these twenty minutes. I look upon you different people who come here week by week to gather some kind of strength for the battle; perhaps to receive anew the direction toward which we ourselves should travel in the coming week; if it may please God, to gather some kind of ammunition by which we can fight the forces of evil that surround us on every side. I like to think that you come here as a matter of discipline; that you are here, because of all the places to which you could have gone, you are here as a matter of choice -- you have decided to come. By that same token each day's life ought to be ordered that there are certain things that you will do because

because you decide that there are things that should be done commensurate with the Christian vow that you have made.

The second thing that occurs to me from this text is that a man should remember that he could lose. That does not mean that I am not at all positive to my reaction (?) of the Christian fortune (.), but I have lived long enough to know that there are people who could slip on the road to , and I have lived long enough to know this characterization of a saint: **A saint is a sinner who just keeps** on trying day by day. No matter how often he may fall, he picks himself up and places himself once more in the right direction.

*I'm embarrassed
that I don't know this!*

Lewis in his

Letters" has this masterful thing to offer

on one of his pages -- it may startle you at first. He implies that the true mark of a Christian believer is not to be found necessarily on the day that he decides for Jesus Christ and then gives himself to picturesque phrases about, "I will always be faithful. You may count on me at the end." He talks, you see, like Peter did. That isn't the true mark of a Christian. Not when he makes this glorious declaration, this marvelous affirmation, of perpetual faithfulness. No, the true mark of the Christian is how when day by day he says, "Oh, Lord, Just for today, give me a token of your grace and your strength that right now I can be found faithful -- today. For, you see, tomorrow never comes until today has run its course. And the victor's wreath belongs to him who is faithful right now. The man who wants to enjoy the victory in the end, let him concern himself right now with the immediate moment.

And then the third thing that comes to me as I think again about this text and of this passage that serves as the Epistle lesson for today, the Apostle Paul was talking about . The Apostle Paul was talking about giving oneself day by day. That is right -- and always keeping in mind the great objectives, beloved,

say to yourself each day: Even though you be a prisoner of this present world, Heaven is my destination. It is not the righteous thing to say; it is not a fanciful thing to say -- a Christian always ought to be able to say it. Heaven is

my destination. And because that is so, then one ought to order each day of his life in that direction. I am running today in order not to regress when it comes to pass. I will find the nearer the great gate. It would do a great deal for a man's soul to remember that.

So many years back -- not too long surely within the memories of all of us who are present -- I obtained intently the notion to that man MacArthur called back from the Far East when he addressed the Joint Session of Congress. And with everyone listening, always keeping in mind the man in the White House who had called him back (I admit I don't remember a single thing he said that day except one -- and therein is truth being inherent in it that echoes all of us at least) -- the total object of what he said, should always be victory. That is, to win. I am not talking now about pacifism ever against military endeavor. But I am talking about a person who goes into a conflict armed mentally by the thought that he is in this thing to see it to the end. Would you apply that truth, my friend, to the Christian life. To the Christian as the last word of is best run **Unashamedly saying, I am in this thing to see it to the end? That is my objective. The Good Book says: He that endureth -- he that endureth. To endure? It means daily I must be found faithful. If tomorrow is to offer you Heaven, then your face must be set towards Heaven right now.**

So order each day, my friend, that you might obtain, and then at the end you will get what you want. Life has a way of giving us what we want. God has a way of not disappointing his saints.

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shipped over to day following the big snow!

Sunday February 10, 1956

..... The Greatest

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled "..... The Greatest". It is based upon the Epistle for the day. The text is the closing verse of this Epistle which is the 13th Verse of the 13th Chapter of Paul's 1st Letter to to the Corinthians: "And now abideth faith, hope and charity: these three but the greatest of these is charity."

To our younger friends who are here let me remind them -- an Epistle is a letter. And when the Apostle Paul had the good fortune to establish one congregation after another he was usually in touch with that congregation and quite frequently he would write them a letter. Now when you and I get a letter, we are not always concerned with just what is said in the letter. We pay attention to the fact that a letter has been written by a particular person and like us not the letter comes to us from a particular place and having been written by a particular person from a particular place that is why it is always so interesting and informative to see the address that is on the envelope. To see the name and address of the addressee. And these are letters in particular quite often hand written and signed and you know how much we value a part of the message.

Now I think that is why it is so interesting that this letter written to the Corinthians was written by Paul, a servant soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. This man who had this wonderful experience of conversion -- now in one great moment it was made plain to him that there is none other Lord and Saviour but Jesus Christ. And Paul, as God would have it, has done more to proclaim the kingdom of Christ for all time than perhaps any other single person who ever lived aside from Jesus Christ. And this man, Paul, who established one congregation after another is the same man who had to pay a great price for discipleship.

You may remember rather readily last Sunday's epistle lesson in which you get this of his sufferings; how again and again Paul at the risk of his life went proclaiming Jesus Christ. And how, as last Sunday's epistle reminded us, there was even that great moment when he was forced to flee and his friends put him in a

basket and let him down over a wall in order that he could make his escape, in order that he could go on preaching and teaching Jesus Christ. He suffered a great deal of persecution and I suppose whenever anyone got a letter from a person like that, he would say, What this man has to say is worth listening to. I know how I would be thrilled if by some strange stroke of fate I would receive a letter from Bishop Ordass. It has been my good privilege to meet him rather casually, but if I should get a letter from Bishop Ordass in Hungary, this man who has been in prison, I attention, because whatever he would speak to me in the name of Jesus Christ would be most significant and I would say, He has a right to speak. Or, if I would find myself in the presence of somebody who has been working on transcontinental ballistic missiles -- I don't know a thing about it, but he does know, and I would pay him rapt attention because I feel I would be listening to an expert and I would listen to what he would tell me, I would listen to what he has to say to me, because I would keep reminding myself, He knows what he is talking about. Maybe that is how they felt when they got a letter from the Apostle Paul, Paul knows what he is talking about. We can well afford to listen and to pay him attention.

Now, it is equally significant that this letter was written to a particular people in a particular place. The letter was sent to folks who lived in Corinth. Corinth was a busy city; it was a city of commerce; it did not enjoy the most savory reputation. Like all cities of much business, it was also a city of corruption, vice, downright wickedness. And Paul is writing a letter to people who lived in a den of iniquity. And when he writes this letter he says to them, Remember, of all the things in life, the greatest is love.

Maybe at first blush they were a bit challenged by that thought. This is Paul; about. Could his enthusiasm for the Christian life have led him astray? Love? We know what love is like in Corinth. There are those places, as we might say today, "of cheap reputation". Women who sacrifice themselves on the altar of love. They give themselves as a cheap sacrifice. Corinth was a city that had those bad places. We know what love is like. We have seen men in this com-

mercial world for love of ambition, for love of success, sacrifice themselves, their family life, their children, everything that they have, for love. We know what love is like. Sensual, ambitious, aggressive, superficial - Paul could be mistaken. That is what you and I might think. But we are not of Corinth. Paul knew the Corinthians, and when Paul said, The greatest thing is love, he was saying he witnessed for love. When I tell you the greatest thing in the world is love, I know what I mean by love.

Our mother tongue, the English language, is poverty stricken in a good many areas. The Greeks fortunately had three different words for love, and each word meant something entirely different from the other. In English we have one word, and you can run the gamut, from the cheapest to the noblest and use the same word. I am thinking of Henry Van Dyke's words,

And love, I often dream of that, the treasure of the earth,
How little they who use the coin, have utilized its worth;
To pay all debts, to reach all hearts, to make all joys
secure,
But love to do its perfect work, must be sincere and pure.

And when Paul was writing to the people of Corinth about the greatest which is love, he was thinking about the most sincere and the most pure.

Let me give you a little lesson in Greek. There are three Greek words for love. The Greek word "eros" -- and when they used that word for love, they were thinking of love that consists of an individual having an affection for a thing or a person for only one reason, and that is, for the way that thing or that person could serve him. Now there is a kind of love that is catalogued in that manner. A man will love a thing or a person so long as that thing or that person can be useful to him; as long as he can keep taking. Now there is in this world of which you and I are a part a type of love like that. One finds its cheap evidence everywhere. The Greeks had a word for it - Eros. Love that is all take. And that love continues and remains as long as a thing or a person can be useful to somebody else and can serve that purpose.

The Greeks had another word when they thought of love -- ~~And when~~

And when they thought of love on that basis, it was a mutual interplay (?), a type of mutual relationship, a type of reciprocal agreement. Now in this present age, much of society is based on that type of love. Whether you want to admit it or not, there are many homes founded on that type of love, as long as there is this mutual relationship, as long as there is a type of reciprocity between man, wife and children. Partnerships in business are held together on that basis. So long as the partner takes care of his part, I will take care of my part. I will give and I will take; I will take and I will give. We try to level off on the basis of races and international relationships on that basis. We will treat Russia in such and such a way as long as we know she will treat us in such and such a way. We are very happy to enter into

with one nation after another nation; we feel unusually magnificent and unusually generous if we feel we can have a type of relationship. We have reached the acme, we have reached the high point when this thing nations. The Greeks had a word for this kind of love, this kind of relationship. I give; I take; I take; I give; I understand.

When the Apostle Paul thought about the love that he had in Jesus Christ, when he thought about the love that is expected of a Christian, he says, Certainly it is not Eräs. No Christian will ever love a person just because he can take. And, he says, It is not distinctively (?) Christian for a person to love someone as long as there is a mutual agreement. Do not other people who are non-Christian live and love on that basis? When he remembered Jesus Christ, he thought of Jesus Christ as someone who when he lived was always dealing graciously with people, and that word "grace" means exactly this: Giving to someone who needs something regardless of his merit, ignoring the fact, of course, that he could never receive. And when the Apostle Paul thought of Jesus Christ, he thought Jesus Christ lived a life like that -- always doing good; always being kind and gracious to people, always giving -- giving -- giving. Jesus Christ doesn't love us because of what he can take from us. Jesus Christ loves us because of what we need and what he can give us -- and when you come to understand Calvary, that is the only way you can explain that word "love". Having loved us, he

loves us to the end, even to the end of Calvary's sad and lonely experience.

Now when it came to call that love, the Greeks didn't have a word for that. Their word "eros" didn't fit; ~~agape~~ didn't fit. So they coined a new word. Interesting, isn't it? The Christian's experience brings into being a brand new word for there ~~isn't~~ is nothing before the time of Christ that could express this kind of love and the word they coined for it is ~~agape~~, the love that is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

Now let me contrast it for you again. Eros, the lowest form of love between people is all take. I love you as long as I can take. ~~agape~~, the highest kind of love known to man is all give. I go on loving as long as you are in need. I will go on loving you as long as I am capable of giving something. And in between, of course, is that second step in the relationship between people -- ~~agape~~. I love as long as there is something for me to give and as long as there is something for me to take.

ignores (?) what you may be able to give. I love only because there is something I have to offer. The nearest thing I have come to find ~~by an~~ expression of that in human relationship is the answer that was given by a mother when once she was asked, "Whom of all of your children do you love most?" (I am not so sure it is a fair question; I am not so sure it is a good question. I give it to you only because of the significance that comes in the answer of the mother, and lends some light on what I am ^{sharing} ~~share~~ with you now -- and the illustration that I offer I would not offer aside from the context of this presentation.) "Whom of all your children do you love most?" And this was her answer: "The one who is most ill until he becomes well; the one who is ^{farthest} ~~farthest~~ from home until he returns. I love most where need is greatest." This is the Christian interpretation of love. I love so long as there is something that I can give.

Now, I frankly admit to you the world knows a great deal about Eros. Sensual love -- love that is always grabbing and taking. You can find evidence of that everywhere.

And the love the world knows a great deal about, the second kind of love -- mutual relationship, interplay, reciprocity. And we are always grateful for any good and noble step we can take in that direction.

But the world has still to take its giant step in the direction of Love that is constantly sacrificing; love that thinks only of an opportunity to give and to be of service. Occasionally it dawns upon us in the Christian experience that there are some things the world will receive only as they receive it from a Christian. The Apostle Paul says it is the Christian's duty to give to the world . It is the Christian's duty to give to the world sacrificially; to love only for the sake of being able to offer something. It won't come from any other source in the world.

That is why I tell you without hesitation there are moments when I stand before an altar and a man and woman are with me. I know something of their background. I know something of their religious training. And it is a great moment when a pastor is able to pronounce husband and wife, these two people who make a pledge and who make a promise. Who when they make that pledge and that promise in the light of Christian love, and make that pledge and promise with the understanding that they will go on loving long after there is something to take; long after, perhaps, there is something to receive; with a thought that so long as God gives them the capacity to live, they will satisfy a basic need in the other's life, regardless of the condition or circumstance that may be a part of the picture ere they breath their last.

It is a thrilling thing to discover relations within the church with a variety of personalities that we may have. There are people who go on serving each other because they are in Christ's name in duty bound to love. And what better definition could I give you for love than this: Always activated good will. Never to work for another's harm, but always for his good.

So I think of this letter written to the Corinthians, written by the Apostle Paul; so I think of Saint Luke Church; Sunday by Sunday we get together to refresh our memories of the fact that God loves us. Why of all symbols do we have the cross

upon the altar, the symbol of God's undying love in Jesus Christ? "No matter how you may treat me, no matter what you may do, I will love you to the very end." And when we come together in Saint Luke Church, we should remember that that is the way God treats us and that is how God is waiting for the Christian to treat somebody else.

Let me tell you this: You will never find this kind of love anywhere else except in the heart of the Christian. That is why it is so important to understand it, and that is why it is so important that we of all the people on the face of the earth, do not lose it. It was the Christian who first coined the word; it was the Christian who first made necessary a new word in the vocabulary. We ought not to forget that.

#

Sunday, February 23, 1958

-- Habakkuk --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

If one could pierce the very vail of Heaven, even right now, it seems to me without too great difficulty he could have selected Habakkuk, the prophet who has written the book which is the basis for our sermon this morning. as we sang this great this-great hymn of the church I think Habakkuk would have said to us, if we could hear him, That is it exactly -- every single verse of every single stanza is telling you what I told you six hundred years before Christ -- that God never forsakes the soul that puts his trust in Him indeed.

It is quite by deliberate intent, my friend, that during these sermons of the Lenten season we shall consider some of the Bible books found in the Old Testament; that the one this morning tucked away there within the pages of the Old Testament is the prophecy of Habakkuk, a little-known character.

Freely you might admit that you have never read his three chapters; freely you might admit this is the first time that you have ever been invited to give any serious thought to him at all. I make bold to submit to you right now that of all the pages of the New Testament, none has challenged my soul more than the prophecy of this man with a strange sounding name -- Habakkuk. Personally, I like him for several reasons, and yet I am very quick to say that I hardly know anything at all about him except what he has written.

That is a challenging word, isn't it? All that we know about him is what he said. You and I should be careful about what we say. People who listen might remember, and the judgment of your character and my character might some day hang not so much on what we did or what we intend to do, but upon what we said! Even so it is with Habakkuk for you and me right now. I cannot tell you a single thing about the man except that he lived about six hundred years before the birth of Christ as a contemporary of the great prophet Jeremiah, and when I read the three chapters of his writing, I am impressed by the indelible mark of his personality which shines through so brilliantly.

I like him -- honestly, I do -- because, for one reason, he was a very honest man who exercised the strange faculty of talking back to God. I do not know

nor should you, but sometimes it is a rather healthy thing for a man to say, "Hold on, God, I am not so sure that I understand" to be the type of person to come to God and say, "God, Why don't you do something?" And when he discovers that God is about to do something, he might be tempted to say, "I am not so sure that that is the right thing to do, God." There is something to be said to a man's credit who is honest enough and brave enough to keep staying with God and asking God to make some things plainer to him.

I suppose in all fairness we ought to say to ourselves that this is a very difficult thing to do. There is always within us the temptation to simplify things, to put things in capsule form. Maybe when we simplify things we our own ego and when we can begin to understand it, we feel we are the master of the thing. Maybe that is one reason why the contemporary (?) mind is always interested in simplifying a thing and putting it in one , and saying, This is it. But one cannot always do that with God for the simple reason doesn't he? For the simple reason that God is God and man is man; God is infinite and we are finite; God is eternal -- we are of this world; God is divine -- we are . We cannot fully ever understand the mind of God. We can never wholly comprehend his plan or his . For the most part we go on seeing through a glass darkly with a fervent hope that some-day face to face -- and then we shall be as we know him.

But here is this man Habakkuk who is endeavoring to try to know the mind of God, and I would sing his praise for it because with each attempt he gets (?) a little bit more and he understands a bit better. Now let me tell you the situation:

Habakkuk, being tremendously in earnest, is concerned about the sins of Judah. That is his native country. Vice -- immortality -- corruption. "God, we are your people. God, you belong to us. God, don't let this thing go on forever. Why don't you do something about it? If you are good, and if you want us to be good, and since

we are wicked, why don't you do something?" That is the way Habakkuk came to God. And God gives him a reply: "Habakkuk, I will do something. Now listen to me carefully. Habakkuk, look over there. Do you see the Chaldeans? (That was another nation in that day.) Do you see them? One of these days they are going to come down to Judah. They are going to sack your cities. The Chaldeans are going to destroy your villages. The Chaldeans will level you with the dust. Habakkuk, That is what is going to happen."

And then Habakkuk turns around and rails against God. "What is that, God? You can't do that. God, You are holy, and corrupt as we are in Judah, we want to be your people. We have the Ten Commandments. We still want to live the way you want us to live. But the Chaldeans -- surely you won't use them. They are wicked, God. They are ungodly. They are downright immoral. They put their faith in their military strength. That is their God." And then Habakkuk says to himself in the presence of God, "Do you mean to tell me, God, holy as you are, that you will use unholy means to accomplish your purpose?"

That is the first chapter. There are three chapters in this book.

So in the first place you have Habakkuk tremendously concerned about God's not doing something, and then when he discovers God is doing something, he cannot possibly agree with God. -- Habakkuk, To complain is one thing, but not to agree is another thing. --

But to the everlasting credit of the man, when you come to the Second Chapter you find him in a glorious position because this is the way the Second Chapter begins: I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me. -- Here is a man who while he cannot understand why God does and he does not, he will not turn his back against God. Argue? Yes, but not ignore. "All right, God, I am going to stay right here. Keep on talking." Bless his soul, he should become the patron saint of all those who are willing to allow God to finish his sentence. You and I wont always do that. We can cut off our

conversation with God and when God that we may or may not understand, we will stop there. Habakkuk, this prophet in the Old Testament says, Keep on talking, God. I will wait. I will be persistent. I will listen.

And in the Second Chapter God goes on talking and God tells Habakkuk some things that Habakkuk would not have learned if Habakkuk had not been willing to stay with God. And this is what the Second Chapter tell us: The Chaldeans are different and they put their strength and faith in their military strength. That is right

Habakkuk. That is true. Let me tell you something. Tyrant as they are, they will succumb to the pressure of the tyrant's hand. They will crumble under their own weight. Wickedness can never prevail. And then God outlined for him certain against people who are wicked no matter where they may be found, because of their wickedness, because of their own weight, eventually fall. (?) Evil may have its day. That is right. Evil may have have its day. Evil may have its generation. But the God of the Old Testament, the God of the prophet Habakkuk, the God who is the father of Jesus Christ, is the supreme one who is eternal. And in his hand is not just one day, but eternity. And God says, History may be history and I may work despite history and through history. But I will always keep it in the hollow of my hand. Man may attempt to wrest the control of the universe out of my hand, but he can never cut off my hand.

So God says to Habakkuk: Wicked as the Chaldeans are, they have their day. They will fall. That is the Second Chapter.

I am reminded of a very simple story of a man, it is said, who took great delight in taunting his religious neighbors in the countryside in which he happened to live. Everybody round about in that particular countryside went to Church except this rascal of a farmer. He was diabolical enough to wait until they were on their way to church to hitch up his team and then go out into the fields so that they would see him. And one season he came to the village parsonage and he said proudly, I ploughed my fields on Sunday; I sowed my seed on Sunday; I cultivated on Sunday; come this fall in the middle of October on Sunday, I shall gather my crops and I can tell

you now it will be the richest crop I have ever gathered. And the old village parson said with the wisdom of a patriot, But God doesn't always settle his accounts by the middle of October. The wicked may have their hour, but the final judgment is God's.

That is what Habakkuk says to us in his writings. I waited on the Lord; this is what he told me. He told me to be patient; he told me to be firm; he told me to be faithful; and what is more, he said, The just man is the man who lives by his faithfulness. The man who is really good is the man who goes on day by day, remembering that God is never less than God, no matter what happens on the periphery or on the surface.

And then you come to the Third Chapter in Habakkuk -- only three chapters and the Third Chapter has one of the finest affirmations of faith that I have ever read. I want to read only the two verses by which the chapter comes to a close: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength and he will make my feet like hinds feet and he will make me to walk in high places."

The ^{SAD} ~~said~~ thing about this whole sermon is this: It could be falling on too many deaf ears. For the most part, we have never wanted for any good thing at the hand of the Lord. For the most part, all of us who are here have never seen wickedness have its hour. For the most part, we have gone along day by day constantly assured of God's smile of favor. But what if ours would have been the burden (?) of Habakkuk?

To make this thing uncomfortably contemporary -- and no word of God ever hits the target until it becomes contemporary -- suppose, in the spirit of Habakkuk we would fall on our knees and say as he said, Well, he said, God, things are rotten (?) in Judah -- Vice, corruption, immortality, evils. Why don't you do something? Suppose we fell on our knees and we said, God, America calls herself a Christian

nation, but she isn't Christian -- Vice, corruption, immortality, they abound on every side. And suppose we allowed God to finish his sentence and God spoke to us today as he spoke to Habakkuk. And suppose God spoke to us on bended knee, I know you are evil and I know America is corrupt. But look at the Soviet states; they are strong. And someday as they progress in their strength they shall level your cities. They shall destroy America.

If you want to make Habakkuk contemporary, you have every right in the ^{in R.L.D.} ~~world~~ to think that way. Because that is exactly the analogy that was used by God in the ~~that~~ that was Habakkuk: Here are the Chaldeans. They will come and destroy Jd ah. And Habakkuk says, But they are wicked; they don't even have the Ten Commandments. They don't revere you. But suppose that were to happen? Where is the man who in the spirit of Habakkuk would stand up and say: Even though this thing should come to pass, I will glory in my God.

I want to tell you one thing -- it will pay you to read Habakkuk again and again. You will not grasp (?) him wholly in the first reading; but go back -- you will be repaid especially well. It is a lesson that we need to learn.

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Sunday, March 16, 1958

-- "Jonah"

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Pastor Raymond Shaheen

As I come again to this pulpit I would resume with you the sermon series scheduled for the Sunday mornings during Lent, a study, as you may remember, of some of the books in the Old Testament. The basis for our study today is the Book of Jonah. I come to this pulpit deliberately -- I warn you right now -- to erase from your face the smile that comes so quickly when you are thinking about Jonah. For Jonah is not the story of a man and a fish. Jonah is the account of a man dealing with God who discovers that God has a deep and abiding concern for every single person, for every single city, for every single nation on the face of the earth.

I will tell you why that smile comes so quickly to your face when you think about Jonah. For the simple reason that all too often when we study the Bible we concern ourselves with the incidental and the insignificant. And unwittingly or wittingly we deal with questions that are not at all important and perhaps ought never to be raised. Such questions as these: Tell me, was there ever really a person such as Jonah? Is he the figment of someone's image, or did he actually live? Tell me now, did this man, Jonah, really live for three days and three nights in the belly of a fish?

These are the questions so frequently raised, and unfortunately, sometimes we never get beyond. The honest student of the Bible should never waste his time raising pointless and unnecessary questions. We do, for instance, say when we come to turn the pages of the Bible, we say, This is God's word. Now what is a word? The word is a vehicle, a means of communication -- something used by which somebody can understand something. Now, since the Bible is God's word, what is God's word to us, then as we read the Book of Jonah, what is God trying to tell us? What is the truth that he desires to mark indelibly upon the fabric of a man's mind? I tell you at once, God is not wasting his time trying to tell us about a man who spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish.

And I would deliberately, with all the earnest ardor of my soul, erase

from your face the smile that comes so quickly -- Ah, yes, Jonah and the whale!

Well, What is the story? What is this account that we find in four chapters, 48 verses in all -- and, by the way, only three of those 48 verses have to deal with the fish. Well, what is it that God wants to tell me?

I remember now the story. Once upon a time God spoke to a man. The man is Jonah. Well, now, we shan't have any difficulty at that point, shall we? Almost all of us believe that this God whom we revere and whom we love is a God who speaks and a God who can and a God who will speak to me. That is a glorious concept. That God will stop me and God will call me by name, and God will say, I have something to say to you; that this God whom we love and whom we respect is a God with whom we can have conversation. That we readily understand because most of us delight in that type of conversation. We freely and willingly tell God that we love him; that we adore him, and just as easily we will be very happy to have God tell us the same thing; to have God look me in the eye and say, You belong to me. I love you. I will provide for you. I will protect you. Now we shan't have any difficulty with this as we read the story of Jonah. God spoke to a man and we are accustomed to that conversation, but most of us terminate our conversation at that point.

The Book of Jonah tell us that when God spoke to him, God gave him marching orders. God said, Jonah, there is something I want you to do. Unfortunately, most of us do not tarry that long in our conferring with God so that God ever gets around to the point, as far as we are concerned, of telling us there is something he wants us to do. Jonah is the account of a man who in conversation with God gets a directive, gets marching orders.

Jonah, I have something I want you to do. I want you to preach. Well, that, too, itself may delight most of us if all we had to do was talk. Jonah, I want you to be my preacher. I am assigning you to a preaching mission. You won't have to preach at home. You can go away from home. That in itself can be a pleasant assignment.

Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh. You should have seen Jonah's face at that point. "Nineveh?" (I think he must have retorted.) "God, you don't want mean Nineveh? Have you

forgotten? We are your chosen people. We are the selected ones. Don't you remember what the people of Nineveh did to us? God, There was never a tribe of rebels ~~who~~ descending upon us who treated us as diabolically as the people of Nineveh. Why, God, they destroyed our cities, they defiled our women, they took our children as captives. That is what they did to us. And you want me to go to Nineveh? Not that I am afraid of it. But you want me to go to Nineveh and to preach to them, to talk about judgment and the possible hope of salvation? There is a that Nineveh should be saved?"

This is the story of a reluctant man. This is a story of a man who gets a marching order from God and the marching order is not to his sole satisfaction. So what does Jonah do? He reverts to type. He goes back to the base human nature that becomes man. - - If what God tells me doesn't please me, then I will run away from God. If God points in this direction, I will go this way -- That is what the Bible means when it said, He got aboard a ship to go to Tarshish, the point farthest away from Nineveh. Landlubber as Jonah was, he was even willing in this bold moment of his to get aboard a ship in his anxious endeavor to run away from God.

Now as we read Jonah we discover that as he was aboard ship he was dealing with men who ~~didn't~~ ^{don't} know the God he knows. They are not his kind of men. (?) And as they have conversation a storm arises at sea. And he, too, is or whatever you might call it. The says, Someone is to blame for this. The curse of the heavens is upon us. There must be a reason. In the guilt complex of a second Jonah recognizing himself and his attempt to run away from God frankly confesses. And even sinners can have their moment of magnitude, so Jonah brave and bold now says: Toss me overboard that you may be free from the curse. Who knows, my friend, maybe this man in his bent to get away from God would even toss himself into the sea rather than do something for God that is not to his liking? The ends to which we are willing to go rather than to do God's will! Such is man.

We read in the Book of Jonah that God brings about miraculously the fish and for three days and three nights Jonah is kept alive in the belly of the fish, and

eventually he comes back. What a wondrous story that would have made for Jonah. -- My experience with God -- God gave me orders; I rebelled; I found myself in an awkward moment; I admitted my guilt; God rescues me -- And suppose at that point he put an amen and pronounced the benediction -- That is my encounter with God.

But, beloved this God whom we have come to love and respect and revere is a responsible God. And he is not wont to forget his ways with men. And, of all things, when Jonah comes back to his second encounter with God, he finds him the same God, and God gives him the same marching orders: Nineveh -- Nineveh.

All right, Jonah goes to Nineveh and Jonah preaches. And Jonah comes into the surprise that many a preacher gets when he discovers his people took him seriously -- and Nineveh decides to repent. And Jonah now is sad. The enemy of his people to be saved? God to give them mercy? God to smile graciously towards them?

That is the story of Jonah. This is the . God gives a directive; man is disobedient; man may repent; God may rescue him; God issues an order; God keeps his promise; man may be disappointed because man is man and not God. This is the story of Jonah. It is not the story about a man and a fish. It is the story of God dealing with a man, endeavoring to make plain to him that God's heart is big enough to include every single soul on the face of the earth.

I must tell you very candidly and very frankly, honestly I cannot tell you whether Jonah actually lived or not, any more than I can tell you that the Good Samaritan actually lived. As far as giving you a particular time and a particular place, as a matter of historical data, with all good conscience, that I cannot give you concerning Jonah. This is why I am telling you. I cannot tell you whether Jonah actually l - i - v - e - d. But this I can tell you, and for many it is a matter of much greater significance: Jonah actually l - i - v - e - s; Jonah lives in your heart and Jonah lives in my heart. Every single time any one of us is foolish enough to believe that God can give us a directive and we can disobey, Jonah becomes very much alive in you and in me, the disobedient and the reluctant. I cannot tell you whether Jonah actually lived, but I can tell you that Jonah lives now. Any time anyone of us is bended

knee fails to have a concern for the souls of God's children wherever they may be found on the face of the earth; if in my prayers I may neglect to raise a petition in behalf of the conversion of those who do not know Jesus Christ wherever they may be found, Jonah is very much alive in my heart. If I foolishly believe that this God whom I worship is a God who smiles only with favor upon Americans, that he smiles only with favor upon those who are people of the free world, that he smiles only with favor upon those who follow the capitalistic (?) scheme, if ever I wittingly or unwittingly would delight in seeing all the arbitrarily consigned to Hell, Jonah is very much alive in my heart and in my soul. If ever on bended knee I think of God as my own private God who has a concern for me and for mine and for us alone, Jonah is very, very much alive.

How foolish we are. As little boys who play with marbles and never catch the significance of the greater game of life, so we toy with the story of Jonah and say it is the story of a man who spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish. There is no book in the entire Bible that is quite like the Book of Jonah. Surely there is none in the entire Old Testament that can match it. The concept of⁹ God who says I have something I want you to do and I want you to have a concern for all of my people no matter where they may be found. They belong to me. You can't make your God white; you can't make your God American; you can't make your God your God and your God alone.

Well, this is the Book of Jonah. I tell you again, I have come to wipe once and forever, I pray, that smile upon your face when you think of Jonah and you think only of Jonah and a fish. This is the book of God who says every single soul, every single city, every nation is a concern of mine, and if you want me to be your God, they must be a concern of yours as well.

#

March 23, 1958

Hosea

This morning's sermon is the concluding one in this series planned for this Lenten Time. As you may know, it has been a study of certain books of the Old Testament. This morning the book that serves as the basis for our meditation is the Book of the Prophet HOSEA. May I tell you at once that of all the prophets in the Old Testament none had an experience quite like the Prophet Hosea. If you haven't read the book, let me tell you a bit about him right away.

To begin with Hosea was a good man. If everyone was justified in using the descriptive good - one was entitled to use it as far as Hosea was concerned - honest, decent, upright - in fact so good that he was one of those few men on the face of the earth to whom, as Wordsworth would have put it, God whispers in the ear. For Hosea was a man to whom God would make special revelation. Hosea was a man who would be singled out and God would tell him certain things - then God would say what I have told you I now would speak through you, you become my mouthpiece. Such was Hosea.

Now this experience that he had - very unusual and most remarkable, good man that he was, he married a woman who was the personification of evil. A wicked thing she was - who was never content to stay home. She was always running away - running away to other men. Turning her back upon Hosea. She lived the life of an adulteress. Seeming always to enjoy, Hosea good man that he was could never wash his hands of her. Strange as it may seem - he loved her. It could have been that he loved her from the very first day that he saw her - it most certainly is true, he loved her to the very last. This is the story of Hosea. Evertime she ran away he would go looking for

her and when he would find her he would take her back home. She even became a prostitute in the Temple Area. She even allowed herself to be as a slave - and Hosea, remarkable man, paid money for her - purchased her back, his own wife and returned her to him. I cannot fully explain it to you. I know what some men would do in a case like that. They would never allow themselves, bluntly speaking, to be a "doormat" for any harlot - and he had married one. Now this is Hosea - this was the woman and when she came back to him she had one child after another and with that, you see, always the uncertainty - how do I know which one is mine?

Hosea, I repeat, was a good man and who knows if it is anything a good man wants it is a good woman - and if it's anything that a good man wants it's a good home. Surely a sensitive soul - spiritually speaking - should be entitled to some kind of guarantee of domestic bliss and felicity. But good man that Hosea was - this he did not have. I ask you in all candor this morning - is there any tragedy quite like this tragedy? To be married to a woman that you love and yet cannot respect. To be married to a woman who keeps running away and she does not come back clean. Is there any tragedy quite like that - when down deep in the soul of almost any man, and every man, there is this terrific hungry to love and to be loved in return - and to be able to claim someone and call her as yours. Then to know when you look her straight in the eye that she is faithful. This is a blessing that every man desires, is it not so? Now is there any tragedy quite like this tragedy? To be denied this. Some might have said to Hosea - "You would be better off if she were dead, Hosea" - How can you go on loving a woman who constantly walks in iniquity - how can you bring her back - such is the tragedy of Hosea.

Now what does Hosea do when tragedy like that comes to him? When this is his misfortune - when this is his burden - when this is his sorrow - what does he do? There are those who would lament - I can hear them now crying - Oh God, I didn't deserve this - Oh God, I want stand it for another day. Don't you ever ask me to take her back. I can hear some men cry like that - bitterly and with resentment in their voices. But what does Hosea do in the face of his tragedy - he says there must be some meaning to this thing - maybe in the light of God's truth I can learn something - then one day it occurred to him. Hosea said what this thing is that has happened to me is a precise picture of what is always going on in the mind and the heart of God. The personal domestic tragedy Hosea tore as it were wide open the very heart of God - and Hosea said "Now I can see what happens to my Heavenly Father. God made us and God chose as his especially beloved, the children of Israel - and God said to us as the people - you belong to me, what have we done? We have played the part of the faithless one - we have been as the harlot. God always claiming us and we have always been running away. We have made delight and we have made sport with those who do not know God and we have become prodigal (?) with the gifts that God himself has lavished upon us. Hosea says this thing that has happened to me has enabled me to understand what is always going on in the heart and mind of God - and out of his personal tragedy he enters into the very depth of God's Love.

These first three chapters of Hosea deal with the prophet's personal domestic unhappiness and then as a basis he builds upon them. The concluding chapters even until the last, which is the fourteenth becomes the prophet's declaration and he says I had an unfaithful wife - God has an unfaithful people - if I, a man, could go on loving

a woman in her faithlessness - ponder the truth of this - God goes on loving us. If you don't do anything else this afternoon, spiritual-wise, may I suggest you read the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Hosea. It is an exceeding wonderful portrait of God and His Love. Sure it's cast in the picture of a man - it's here Hosea says God deals with us as a father deals with a child - Tenderly. The Prophet Hosea says when Israel was a child I loved him and called my son out of Egypt as they call them so they went from them, they sacrificed unto _____ and burned incense to graven images - I even taught Ephraim how to walk. That's his name for the people of Israel. I took him up in my arms, I held him with the bonds of love and then in the succeeding verses the prophet says what Israel had done - she had gone after other lovers - she wild away her years - serving and doing things, not pleasing to God. And then you have God in this great moment of anguish - how shall I give thee up Ephraim, that's his word for Israel - how shall I deliver thee - how shall I make thee as Admah - how shall I set thee as Zeboim - that's other places, you see, that had been destroyed because of their sins. God said my heart is turned within me and my repentings are kindled together - and then he said I will not execute the fierceness of my anger - I will not return to destroy Ephraim - for I am God and not man - the Holy one in the midst of thee and I shall not enter into thy city. This I tell you is a magnificent concept of God - a God who is never less than a God of Love - a God who can never wash his hands of his children - a God who will never allow them to be themselves for ever. Now listen carefully because this is true - don't you ever be foolish enough to make license of a God who is as wonderful as that. Don't you ever say to yourself foolishly - well if God is a God of Love he may be like a doating

old grandfather who no matter what I may do will say to me, "Well come on back - come on back" and pat me on the shoulder and say everything is perfectly all right. How it may be with you I don't know but as for myself I can never think of God ever saying to any man - It's all right - perfectly all right. There is only one who is perfect and that is God - and nothing that you and I will ever be able to do will be perfect in the sight of God. Don't ever be foolish enough to think that God smilingly and benignly will pat you on the back and say it is all right. But when a man comes back to God - sinner as he may be - he comes back a sinner - and a sinner can never completely free himself from the terrible consequences of his misdeeds. That's an awful thing to have to tell you - by the Grace of God I will never preach no easy, no comfortable Gospel to any of you - by the Grace of God I dare not tell you that God will always pat you on the shoulder and say that everything is perfectly all right. You and I are sinners and while God may forgive us and while God may offer us the hand by which we can be restored by his bond of love - sinner as we may be we come back carrying with us the terrible consequences of our sins and the scars may remain but the bond may be restored. Whenever anyone reads Hosea he is in duty bound to remember that when Hosea allowed his wife, Gomer, to come back for the last time she had a waiting period in which she could not be with her husband and in which she dared not go back to her old cheap lovers. A period when she had to be completely by herself. I can't think of anything that brings the punishment far greater than that - then when a man is alone and there is paraded in front of him all of his iniquitous deeds. Gomer could not go now to Hosea for the moment - and she could not return to those cheap arms of her lovers and know

the false security in this moment now she is alone. Who knows there may come to each of us that terrible moment when we stand alone before God, dragging behind us the deadweight of our sins. Well she came back to Hosea and the bond remained unbroken. Hosea said this is a picture - it is a picture of God and the human soul - it's a picture of God and his children. God is a God of Love - he will never let us go - he is always waiting to have us come back. One of these days before too long we'll be coming into this Church with a Holy Hoist that perhaps we may find peculiar to that day. It will be Good Friday, and veiled before us on the altar will be the Cross - the bitter reminder that our sins cost God His Son. We'll wait ther in the presence of the shadow of the Cross and then we'll have to say to ourselves that all that we have done we have done against ourselves and at the same time broken God's heart. But God who is a God of Love says I will still love you - I will still claim you. I can't explain it to you - we are prisoners of this world and we know how we would react, but God says I am not man, I am God. Now when you and I stack ourselves against something as wonderful as that - when we meditate upon God's unfailing love and our faithlessness - maybe our lives will be transformed - maybe. Isn't that terrible thing to have to tell you - maybe - for some it will - for some it want - for all of us it should.

Easter Sunday, 1958 --- "On the Meaning of Easter" --- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "On the Meaning of Easter". The text is the 58th Verse of the 26th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: "But Peter followed Him afar off into the high priest's palace, and went in and sat with the servants to see the end."

-- And Peter went in and sat with the servants to see the end. is it curiosity or is it devotion that prompted Peter to do that paining thing? One might just as well ask the question, Is it curiosity or is it devotion that will take a man back to the room again and again just to sit by the side of the bed where a patient lies dying? Is it curiosity or is it devotion that will take a man halfway across the continent to be with his son, perhaps in a great moment of crisis, in the great moment in his life that could be the end of his career? Is it curiosity or is it devotion that prompts any man to be around when something looks like the end? Be that as it may, instinctively in the hearts and souls of most of us there is a tendency to be there at the end.

So Peter waited. They had taken his Lord and Master, betrayed, denied, forsaken, arrested -- one step after another taking place in the trial. It looked like the end. Peter wanted to be there. Even so it was with Mary, the beloved mother of our Lord, and the other Mary waiting anxiously at the foot of the cross just to be there - at the end. The Roman Soldiers paid to see men die, waiting for only one purpose, just to wind the thing up: Let him breathe his last; let him be declared dead -- they waited for the end.

And Peter went in to the palace of the high priests to sit with the servants to see the end -- to see the end that never came. And this, my friend, is the meaning of Easter -- the end with God never comes. For the meaning of Easter in the mind of God is this: There is always more to come. There is something to follow.

This Easter, this Easter concept is in the mind of God. Good Friday, if you please, is something that was in the mind of man. They thought they could end it.

That is what man did when diabolical impulses controlled him. Man goes to Good Friday and says, This is it. God comes back on Easter morning and says, But that isn't it. There is more to come.

Do you know that before the discovery of America the Spaniards had coins and on the coins they imprinted the inscription of the hills of of the streets of and then they had the inscription, Nothing before; nothing beyond. But then Columbus made his discovery and they made on more coins the Spaniards date and when they had this inscription of the

and then they had There is something beyond. And that, beloved, is the meaning of Easter. God says, There is something more to come. There is something beyond.

Why don't you make the application of that truth now? Why don't you help in the development of this sermon? Why don't you see (?) so quickly the things that add up now with richer and deeper meaning? After Good Friday comes Easter. And God says, This is something that is yet to be added to the story. Man never has the last word. God has a way of going on speaking and acting.

we are frail, human creatures, prisoners of this world in a sense, so terribly sensitive to suffering and disappointment and frustrations, that we never quite appreciate what happens on Easter morning.

Over in , a town in northern Italy, devout and faithful followers of the church have made a kind of Calvary in a reproduction, and as one climbs the spans (?), he does the stations of the cross. One comes to a particular place and there he stops and there is a Jesus Christ the lonely, the sorrowful way to Calvary. And good and faithful souls come and they meditate and they pray and they as they take this lonely road that Jesus Christ took. But would you believe me if I were to tell you, as I have been told, that they have to have guides stationed at what appears as the last station of the cross, the Crucifixion. The path is well-worn, station by station, to the Cruci-

fixion station. But many of the pilgrims are wont to stop there and to go back down the slope. And there are gudies there whose only business is this: Would you please continue? This is not the end. The shrine of the resurrection is just over the top of the hill.

That is a symbol of man. He can appreciate the fact that Jesus Christ was born. He may appreciate to a degree that Jesus Christ suffered and died, and he may be perfectly willing to stop at that point. But God, even as this guide stationed there at the crucifixion said, Keep moving; this is not the end. There is something beyond.

To the everlasting credit of the reformer when they placed the symbol of the crucifixion upon the altar, they placed a bare gleaming cross without the corpse, without the body of our Lord hanging upon it. For, you see, in the mind of the Christian, the crucifixion is not the last thing that happened to God, and it is not the last thing that God did. There was a grave that was made empty, and Peter waited to see the end -- an end that never came.

This is the meaning of Easter. What is that precious word in the vocabulary of the Christian? World without end; world without end. God has eternity in his hand -- always something yet to come.

Now let us get back and finish this sermon together. Since this is the meaning of Easter, we say to ourselves: Yes, there is no end, therefore, to the capability of God take defeat and wrest from defeat victory. That's right. He took Calvary's cruel cross and he said, All right. If that is what man wants to do, let him do it. But God is able to take that cross and to say, Wait a minute. Wait, if you will, three days. And beyond that cross I will show you an empty grave. This is the meaning of Easter. There is no end to the capability of God by which he can handle defeat victoriously. And wherever there have been men and women who had been possessed by the spirit of Jesus Christ, they have found that there is no end by which they can see victory come out of defeat.

The meaning of Easter brings home to the heart of each one of us that after Calvary there is the Resurrection Garden, and then Jesus Christ who goes from disciple

to disciple -- and what does he do when he confronts each disciple? He assures them that he still loves them and he will forgive them. The meaning of Easter is that there is no end to the forgiveness of God; nothing can keep God from being a God of forgiveness. It was not an easy thing for Peter who had denied his Lord to be confronted by Jesus Christ and to have Jesus Christ meet him again and to restore him into the bond of fellowship -- and that is the crowning glory of forgiveness -- to be restored to the bond of fellowship. It was not an easy ^{thing} for each of the disciples to be confronted by Jesus Christ, and each in turn to discover that God's forgiveness was still there; nothing could stop it.

I have lived long enough to be confronted by evil things in my own life, and I frankly confess that I have a great deal of difficulty in forgiving myself. And I have also had enough relationships with some people to discover that I have difficulty in forgiving somepeople that I know. And if you want to be as honest as I am right now, you could bear testimony to those facts just as well as I. We have difficulty forgiving ourselves and forgiving other people, but there is no end to God's forgiveness of my soul. When in true penitence I come to Him, This is the meaning of Easter. A God who Jesus Christ is killed and that Jesus Christ comes back, finds them and says: When they are penitent, I forgive. This is the meaning of Easter. The abiding compassion of Jesus Christ.

Part of the Easter story is what happened on Easter night. You remember how two weary disciples went their way to Jerusalem, and how hope seems to spring eternal in the human breast, and how just this faint flicker was being fanned by a drying spirit (?) as they said to the stranger who drew near to them -- the stranger (that is a title you can use for Jesus Christ -- unfortunately, the perpetual stranger) -- and as he drew near to them he began to with him, and after they had walked a mile or so, they wanted to stop, but he wanted to go on. This God of ours always ^{wanting} ~~wants~~ to go on, always wanting to add something else, and always better.

When the grave was made empty, the truth is being shouted to the world: He is not here and because He is not here, He now can be found everywhere. The meaning

of Easter is Jesus Christ becomes the eternal pilgrim, the abiding companion.

Leslie Wetherhead (?) has a beautiful illustration about a man who was told that the disease that he had was incurable. It meant that there would be times when he would be walking alone; not even those whom he dearly loved could be with him constantly. to speak an assuring word. Leslie Wetherhead said, This man had a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ. -- I will stop at this point to give you the end of this story right now, and then I will go back and pick it up again. When the man breathed his last, they found him with his hand upon the arm of a rocker close by his bed. The truth of the story is that in his pain and in his suffering and his anguish when he could bear it no longer, he allowed himself to believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal companion, the constant companion, the abiding presence, was there in that room, seated in that rocker. And it was the abiding presence of Jesus Christ that sustained him.

That is not fantasy, my friend. More than one faithful soul was persevered victoriously to the end because he remembered the glorious truth of Easter -- Jesus Christ is alive and is the constant companion. "Lo, I am with you always" is the word of Jesus Christ.

This is the meaning of Easter: That while it looked like death for God, there is no such thing as death. The word is life, for from the grave there came eternal life.

When I stood in the Coliseum, as some of you perhaps have done, I could hear again the echoes of the voices as they tell us how the Christians were dragged into the arena and how that diabolical, that wicked Nero, made sport of the Christians. With death coming any second they sang because they knew that Nero might kill the body, but with God their lives would be eternal.

Alas for him who never sees the stars shine through the cypress
trees;
Who only lays his dead away and lingers not to see the break of
day;

Who has not learned the truth
that life is ever Lord of death
And love can never lose its own.

This is the meaning of Easter. Peter sat to see the end -- an end that never came.

They tell us that when the news of the Battle of Waterloo came back to England, it was brought by a ship that docked in the southern part of England and then by semaphore that signaled the news back to London by way of Winchester Cathedral, and those that were there waiting to see the signal when they saw it was coming eagerly waited: W - E - L - L - I - N - G - T - O - N D - F - E - A - T - E - D -- then a cloud set in. Wearily and sorely (?) beset the Englishman bowed his head. Wellington Defeated. This is the end. But lo and behold, the cloud disappeared and someone caught again the semaphore. And the semaphore ^{continued} ~~continued~~. To the words, Wellington Defeated, came these words: T - H - E E - N - E - M - Y. Wellington defeated the enemy.

On Good Friday the word said the signal in the sky is this: Jesus Christ defeated. Three days later the cloud disappears and the story of a grave that is made empty. Jesus Christ defeated the enemy.

This is the meaning of Easter, my friend. With God there is always something more -- something beyond.

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APRIL 20, 1958

The Sermon is entitled "As Sheep Who Stray". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the 25th Verse of the Second Chapter of The First General Epistle of Peter. "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls".

It's a kind of peculiar admission that I make as I come to this Sacred Desk this morning. I want to tell you what most Preachers feel in their hearts when they come to the Pulpit. If I know their hearts, as I know my own, I am constrained to say - that they wonder if what they are about to preach might be helpful to anyone. That's a peculiar admission that I make, and what I am now about to say is just as peculiar. Contrary to this statement, as I come to this Desk right now, in my heart I fervently believe that what I am about to say in this Sermon this morning will most certainly be helpful to some of you. That I most certainly believe. There are some of you here this morning who might say to yourself once I have finished - he has spoken to my condition. What he has said, I was meant to hear and I am helped for having heard it. Now how many of you may fall into that group I do not know, but I can characterize you. I'll tell you who the person is that's going to be helped in this Sermon this morning - boldly and confidently I tell you. If you should be a person who in some great moment of his soul has come face to face with Jesus Christ and you have been made to believe that you were meant to walk a path with Him - and you made him certain promises - and again and again, in your life there has come back to you the radiance of that moment, the joy and the bliss of it - this Sermon is being meant for you; because you are just as human as the rest of us - and after you've had those great moments of the soul you made certain noble resolutions - only to discover that you have not kept them - and while at one time you knew

the abiding joy of the presence of Jesus Christ - you have come to the place where you had to confess that there are times when He wasn't very real to you, and what is more there had been times when you had not been a very good follower. You had followed afar - in fact you have gone so far as to stray - to find yourself completely separated and divorced so it would appear from the presence of God. Now if you're that person, then this Sermon is being meant for you.

In the preparation of it, my own soul has been fed. For I have had to say to myself as I would say to some of you - we have been as sheep who have gone astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. It is a metaphor - it is the picture of speech that applies to those of us who having known the abiding presence of Jesus Christ have had to admit that there have been times when we have not been in His company. We have been far, far away - from His Peace - from His Power - from His Presence - but never, never, from His Patience. Let me tell you that when people discover that they are away from the presence of God - when he seems so far removed and the great lustre has grown dim - it could be that it has occurred in three different ways.

Some people fall away from the presence of Christ because they become bewildered. They have made Him certain promises and they know certain wonderful things in His name - but then life with its pressure, with its strain and with its stress comes in upon us, and because of one thing or another we become bewildered. We do things that we were never meant to do - and we go places that we never intended to visit - and we say things that moments of reflection seem terribly alien to our own lips. It's all because we were bewildered and confused. That can happen to some people, but the person who finds this Sermon most helpful this morning is not that kind of person. Thank God the pressure and the strain

of life have never been so great that they have left him completely bewildered. On the other hand, there are some people away from the presence of God and the joy of His peace, who have gotten that way because they deliberately chose to turn their back against God.

_____ the Prodigal Son - they made up their minds, but what was right and decent would not be theirs; and there is a very strange kind of person, so strange that most of us can hardly comprehend his personality - who having been taught the precepts of God, gets to the place where he looks God straight in the eye and says No Thank You. I know what you say, and I know what you recommend God - but I have another way of handling the situation and if you want to know it, I know that my way that I now choose is not your way. And there are some people who have gone away from the presence of God quite deliberately, but the person who finds this Sermon this morning most helpful - Thank God, has never been foolish enough to talk that way. He may be away from the presence of God but it's not because he deliberately chose. The Bible says, "He's gone away, He's gone astray like a lost sheep". That's one of the wonderful thing about the Bible. It becomes this mirror, you see, by which we so easily catch the reflection of all that we are - and some of us have to say, after our noble resolutions have been made, and we find ourselves so far from being all that we wanted to be - will it happen that the sheep goes astray. We didn't want it to be that way - we never thought it would turn out that way but here we are and there is God - and we seem to be separated. That metaphor - "For we are His sheep going astray". How did the sheep go astray? Why he just nibbles one blade of grass at a time - he becomes preoccupied with the thing closest at hand - he gives

no concern to where he ought to go - or the one he ought to follow. He's perfectly content to take one minute by itself, at a time - and as he gives himself to that type of meandering suddenly he discovers himself feared, using the figure of speech - and way over there in the distance the Shepherd and the rest of the company of the people. For all we, like sheep, have gone astray. It has happened to some of us. But take heart, my friend, blessed indeed is that man who knows he has gone astray and now begins to find the ray of hope. There's always hope for a man who knows he is somewhere he doesn't belong. There's always hope for a man when he is driven to his knees and finds God - even though at so great a distance - but still looks in the direction of God. There is always hope for that man. And by the Grace of God, given to me as a Pastor, God's Under Shepherd, I always consider it an encouraging thing when in the telephone conversation I say, "Please come to see me, you and your problem come" - and in the confessional that I am privileged to establish as your Pastor, as your Shepherd, as the Bishop of your soul - I say to myself this is always a healthy thing when a man comes even to a Pastor and wants to find again the path that for awhile has been lost. There is hope for that person who knows that he has gone astray - who knows he is somewhere that he does not belong. That's saying something to you, isn't it? If it doesn't say anything to you at all, my friend, it ought to say this - that as we take our course through life we will be finding constantly people who are straying - who are not as near to the things that matter most as they should be; and somewhere in heaven above there is a God who is patient with them - who even endowed them with the capability of going astray. God is patient with them; and if God is patient with them, God expects us to be patient with them while they go astray - hoping and praying that some day it

will dawn upon them that they are not where they belong. Then this too must be said, one of the glorious truths of the Christian Religion - peculiar to the Christian Religion, in fact, is this concept of God who is always seeking and always longing for something that's lost. In one of the most beautiful and comforting pictures in Scripture - Jesus Christ tells us about a man who is a Shepherd and at eventide when the sheep returned to the fold he stood there by the gate of the fold - 96 - 97 - 98 - 99 and where, where now, is the 100th one? And Jesus said, he makes those that are there secure - guarantees them protection against all that the night might bring, and then at the risk of his own life he goes out into the dark night and he will not be satisfied until he finds what has gone astray. Christianity is the only religion on the face of the earth that paints God like that - A God who says - You belong to me - You belong to me no matter where you are - and I will look for you - and I will long for you until I find you.

My friends, astray you may go - and you may stray simply because you pay no attention ^{to} where you ought to go - but in Heaven above there is a God who knows where you are and there is a God that's longing for you and He will go looking for you. Maybe it's when that thought occurs to us that we are willing to turn around and go back. I must call your attention to something that's very very obvious - In this text the concern is not for a lamb - the concern is for a sheep. You and I who are a tiny bit older than some of the rest of us - we are the sheep, and the concern is for sheep who stray.

I want to read you something now - it's a poem. But I'm not reading it to you as poetry - it isn't good poetry, but it tells in a very simple and a very plain _____ a most significant truth---

It was a sheep - not a lamb that strayed away in the Parable
Jesus told

A grown-up sheep had gone astray - and the 90 and 9 in the
fold.

Out on the hillside - out in the cold - for the sheep the good
Shepherd sought

And back to the flock, safe into fold - for the sheep the good
Shepherd brought.

And why for the sheep should we earnestly long - and earnestly
hope and pray

Because there is danger, if they go wrong - they will lead the
lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep you know - wherever the sheep
may stray

When the sheep go wrong, it will not take long - for the lambs are
as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead - for the sake of the
lambs today

If the lambs are lost what a terrible cost - some people will have
to pay.

— *Anonymous*

Ramond Shaheen

April 27, 1958

The sermon is entitled "The Christian Answer" - and the text is from the Epistle for the day, the 15th verse of the second chapter of I Peter, "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

Why don't I begin first by telling you not so much what I think but rather what I think is your reaction to this text. I think to a degree that you are saying to yourselves as soon as you hear these words, "unfair, unjust, too idealistic." Now, if that is your reaction to this text, what would you do if I had chosen another from this same Epistle? This one, for instance: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." The chances are, as you hear this, your reaction is the average one - it is unfair, it is unjust, it is unreasonable. Your reaction, of course, is - and I quote - "I don't like it." Human as we are, there isn't a thing about either of these texts that we really like. It would be far easier, for example, for me to come to this desk this morning and tell you that a pattern ^{Christian} for behavior is something like this: you behave honestly, decently and well whenever it is expedient and convenient; if people are good to you, you be good to them; if they are gracious to you, you be gracious to them; if people are unkind to you, you don't have to be kind to them in return; if people smite you upon the cheek, you smite them in return, or better still, you hit them before they hit you. Now, that kind of language you would understand. I am quite certain about that, because that is the language of the world, that is the pattern that you find for behavior everywhere outside of these sacred walls - a tit-for-tat philosophy. Be good to those who are good to you and treat maliciously those who so treat you. And so, because we are unable to throw off from us the cloak of dust which descends upon us as we traffic with the world, we therefore say such teaching is unreasonable, unfair, and unjust. The world goes on shouting it, however, and the world goes on

living by it, and for that reason we must mark up so little progress in the development of our spiritual life.

This text from which I cannot run away falls very easily into three parts. FOR SO IS THE WILL OF GOD ---- that you cannot ignore. There are some of us who believe that once we have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, we have no alternative except to endeavor to do the things that please Him. We must face the question again and again - what now is the right thing in God's sight? Christian disciplining involves the principle of obedience. If I were to read the New Testament as though I had never read it before, I am quite certain that I would say to myself, "it is a wonder that our Lord succeeded in getting any disciples at all." Again and again I am confronted by the fact that He made it perfectly plain to them that if they wanted to come after Him they would have to obey Him. He had a standard that he expected them to live up to, and He was not inclined to give them very much latitude. "If any man will come after me" - this is it! Thanks be to God that even to this day when the Christian Church invites converts into the religion of Jesus Christ, she ~~always~~ holds before them certain standards - not the least among them is the question "will you follow Jesus Christ" - it is explicit and implicit in all that she asks of any adherent.

There is such a thing as God's will, and it is the duty of the Christian to make the discovery of what this will of God is for his life. Sad to relate - being human, it is oftentimes the last thing that we want to know. I have told you before - I will tell it to you now - by the grace of God, given to me as a Pastor, sometimes it is my privilege and my duty to become involved in other people's lives and their problems. Now, as a Pastor, if I am to fulfill my role aright, I must again and again speak the needful phrase - "what now will you do that is pleasing in God's eye", when they are wrestling with their problem, and one or the other, or both of them, is focusing his eye, or their eyes, upon how this thing seems right to them. My usefulness at that moment is guaranteed only as I challenge them to focus their eyes upon ~~ix~~ not what each of them may think

but what now do you think God thinks; that is, how will you resolve your problem within the Christian framework. If you are wrestling for a pattern for behavior, that is, what now do I do next as a Christian, I have no choice but to ask what is the thing that is right with God. This comes to us, of course, on good authority, for even Jesus Christ goes into the Gethsemane Garden, falling upon His knees and saying "Heavenly Father, what is your will?" A Christian must begin at that point. Sometimes we are disappointed, even as we pray or read the scriptures, for we get no clear blueprint. If only God would make very plain to me just what the next step should be, or where the series of steps should take me. There is a comforting passage in the Scripture, bound up in all the philosophy of the sacred page ---if a man will know the Lord's will, he will know." That is ever so much more than a play on words. God has a way of making some things plain, if only as to what the direction is in which we are to move. For some people the problem is not so much what is the will of God, but rather do I really want to know what God's will is? The Apostle Peter says very plainly in this text, "for so is the will of God" - and as a Christian neither one of us dares ignore it.

Now we come to the second division of the text - "that with well doing." Ah, God expects me to do something - that I should behave in a better manner, that is distinctively helpful and Christian. Whether you care to accept this or not, I am in duty bound to tell you that God has a single standard of behavior for His followers. God expects Christians to behave as Christians every time, regardless of the conditions or circumstances that surround them. Sometimes we are naive enough to think that God is going to perform His will without us or despite us. For that reason we are quite content to label something as the will of God when it has to do with the earthquake, the wind, or the fire. God will snap His fingers and perform a miracle. Perhaps a great tragedy occurs. We cannot explain it. We say, "that is God's will." But this I say to you - God does not always choose to work that way. God's preferred method in the performance of a miracle is to ^{reach} ~~large~~ for a human being. When God wanted to work that perfect miracle of miracles,

when Jesus Christ came into the world, He used people - always in the life of Christ, people - people - people. And the cause of Christ is advanced or abated, according to the behavior pattern of people. Why did He reach for Mary, Mother of our Lord? That her purity and integrity should be the fit motherhood for Jesus Christ. By the same token he reaches for Joseph, whose faithfulness and devotion surround the growing Christ. God may sometimes see that His will is done without human cooperation. He may have to use people as tools. It is better if they can be used as partners. Let me tell you this - that with all my heart I honestly believe that we never really pray the Lord's Prayer, that one petition in particular, "Thy will be done," until we see it more as a matter of cooperation than a thing of resignation. All right, God, you take over - let your will be done - you do it all by yourself. That is no way to pray that prayer; rather, Thy will be done by me and through me, for so is the will of God, that with well doing ---. There is no parenthesis, there is no latitude at that point. He does not allow us the liberty of saying, "just this once, God, let me hit him back; just this once, God, let me treat her as she treats me." It just isn't there; it isn't in the book; it isn't in the text. FOR SO IS THE WILL OF GOD, that with well doing -- that means always, at any time, to anyone, regardless of the conditions or circumstances. And I know what you are thinking, to the degree you are of the same opinion as ~~Exxx~~ when you heard the text for the first time. Your words - listen to them again - "unfair, unjust, unreasonable, too idealistic."

Now, the third part of the text - "YE MAY PUT TO SILENCE THE IGNORANCE OF FOOLISH MEN." You may interpret the last part of this text in this way: you may put to silence men who are wicked and unrighteous. By the way, what kind of Christianity would it be that would be confined to a totally Christian world - what kind of Christianity would it be that would allow Christians to treat Christians kindly and not be bound to treat the non-Christian in Christ-like fashion. We must recognize the truth - that Christians must live in a non-

Christian or un-Christian world. By the way, we must recognize the thought that the all-consuming passion in the mind of God is to win people to His way, and the text introduces us to His strategy and to His procedure. This is the way to treat all people in Christ-like fashion. Every Christian is expected to act as Jesus Christ ~~did~~ would if He were standing where you are. There is no such thing as a dual standard of behavior - Christian at one time, less than Christian at another time. What a comforting thing it would be if the Apostle Peter could give us in a specific situation an example of how to treat an un-Christian person in a Christian way. He lays down the principle; he does not point up a particular situation. Even that the Apostle Peter does not allow, because there are some of us who are not brave and strong enough to get beyond a specific situation, always hiding behind the fact that perhaps that particular ~~set~~ set of circumstances would not ~~parallel~~ parallel ours. So the principle is laid down. There is a bit of consolation that comes to each of us as we remember this is a transformed Peter who is speaking. This is the speech of a man who has had something happen to him. Peter now is talking after Calvary, after the Resurrection, after the Ascension, after Pentecost. He had been a witness to each of these and the baptism of the Holy Spirit had enlightened him. He has discovered that there is a margin - that there is a margin in this world where God is right and man is wrong, that margin is in treating people as God would have them treated, difficult as it may be on your part and mind. There is only one standard for Christian behavior - never treat a man less than the way by which Jesus Christ would treat him.

You should be filling in the lines now for yourself - if I can't think like Peter, if I can't react as Peter did, if I can't accept this as Christian strategy, then it could be that I have not traveled the road that Peter traveled. I have yet to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Maybe I have not taken that long look at Calvary, where someone died - that perfect life of love. Maybe I haven't accepted the fact of the Resurrection - Jesus Christ alive, within a man's soul, by which I am also enabled by the Holy Spirit to treat men ~~in~~ other than the way of ordinary human behavior.

Honestly now, I don't know what you are thinking at this point. I thought I knew at the beginning. It could be that some of you are of the same opinion as when this sermon was begun. It could be that some of you shake your head and say "no" - it could be that some of you have looked up and seen the face of Jesus Christ - when you have seen the lines of love upon His face, you might say to yourself, I would rather trust His way than mine. Beloved, I have not come to this desk to preach an easy Gospel. I have come to remind you that God has a way and a will for your life, and that is that as a follower of Jesus Christ you should behave toward other people the way Jesus Christ would behave. Now, the more and the better you know Him the more and the better you will know what that way is.

MAY 4, 1958

The Sermon is entitled, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH. It is based upon the Gospel Lesson for the day and the text is a portion of the 13th Verse of the 16th Chapter of The Gospel According To John:

"Howbeit when He, The Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth "

Tell me, my friend, what do you think is the biggest problem on the mind of God? Or is it that you are too busy with your own problems that you haven't time to think about what could be problems of God? You're in for a salutary spiritual experience, it would seem to me, if you might ask yourself the question - what now could be God's biggest problem? As you endeavor to answer the question, you might say to yourself - well God's biggest problem is trying to get me to behave. God's biggest problem, perhaps, is trying to get me to love Him. Because God wants us to know that He is the God of Love and He wants love in return - and God wants to delight in seeing that His children behave as children should behave in the sight of their Heavenly Father. Well, either of those answers could be acceptable - but would you be willing to allow me to hazard an opinion and tell you that it seems to me that perhaps the biggest problem in the mind of God is getting you and me to believe Him - To Believe Him. To believe that He is - and to go around being made aware of the fact that He is - to believe what he says is true - to believe that, if you please, Jesus Christ is The Way, The Truth, and The ^{life} ~~Light~~. If I were to come to this Good Book very objectively and begin with the first chapter and read it until the end - I might have to say to myself - well this is the Book of God's Revelation - one revelation of himself after another - in order that man ^{He} ~~gives~~ child - might come to believe Him.

You know the story of the Bible. How God takes a certain group of people from the face of the earth and he says, I will work through you - I will tell you certain things, then in the end you might become the instrument in my hand by which other people will know what I am telling you. And so God in his endeavor to reveal Himself, in order that they might believe, raises up the ^{patriarchs} patriots and then He gives them the Commandments - and then he raises up judges, and prophets, and priests, and kings. One after another, in order that they might get to believe in God. The one God, above all Gods. The record has it that for awhile some of them believe and then they become faithless. Ah, the Bible has a good description for it - it calls them as harlots who do not prove themselves faithful - but become faithless and no longer believe in their God, and they go after other Gods with the simple reason that they no longer believe in the one true God. This is the problem forever in the mind of God. What now, shall I do? How can I get them to believe? Then we come to recognize that there is such a thing as The New Testament; and God says, "If I send them prophets and they do not believe - If I send them priests and they do not believe - If I send them judges and they do not believe - If I send them kings and they do not believe - then I will go to them myself". And Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of God, here on this earth - God in the flesh, for this great purpose that they shall see Him as The Way, The Truth and The ^{Life} Light. And with something as a sanctified imagination, I think I can look back and I can catch something of the faint glimpse of a smile upon the face of God - for somewhere in that thirty-three year period - when Christ comes to earth, God in the flesh, there is some soul here and there is some soul there who says - Yes, this now, this is what God is like for we have seen the face of Jesus Christ. We have never heard anyone preach

the way he preaches - this is God's voice - we have never seen anyone stretch forth a hand and put pulsating ~~fading~~ life in the body of a diseased man. And we say to ourselves, this hand stretched forth so perfectly - this is the hand of God - and there is a smile upon the face of God, I think. How in one moment after another, there is someone who comes forth and puts his own finger to his lips reverently when he thinks of Jesus Christ and says - GOD.

Up until quite recently, I use to think that people who lived in the day of Jesus Christ had a decided advantage. I envied Peter, James, John, Matthew, Andrew, Bartholomew, even Judas Iscariot. To be able to walk with Jesus Christ - to be able to know that at a particular time, perhaps, he might become a part of the company of my group - to know that at the end of a hot day, in some quiet secluded spot, we would be alone - and Jesus Christ would tell us first-hand what is in the mind of God. With a degree of enthusiasm, I use to sing that old gospel hymn, "I Wish That I Had Been With Him Then". You remember how one stanza after another paints it. Then I am not so sure that they have an advantage over you and over me. For you see they would believe for awhile, but then one night there was that terrible dark night upon earth when they took Jesus Christ and nailed Him to a cross and every last one of the disciples forsook Him and fled - even listed in the group, a betrayer, a denier. I no longer envy Judas Iscariot - and for that particular chapter in his life, I am not so sure now that I envy Peter, James and John. For there was a moment too, you see, when they did not believe - even though they had been with Him - even though after God had said to Jesus Christ - Here are thirty-three years - you take them - and in those three years in particular, you make that unforgettable impact upon the mind of man. Give them that rememberable picture of all

that I am. You shall never be less than God - and even the disciples then had their moments of unbelief, when they too doubted. So I say to myself, they had no advantage over me, for while I now doubt and have my moments of unbelief - they too had theirs. But I say quickly to myself, this mind of God, how preplexed it must become - ^{fatherly} patriots, judges, prophets, priests, kings, even Jesus Christ, and still the problem of problems remains in the mind of God - How can I get them to believe? How can I get them to see me as I am? How can I get them to understand the words of Jesus Christ - I am The Way, The Truth and The Light, ^{He} whoever sees Me, sees God. Jesus Christ had his day. What now will God do - man would still not believe. What would you do if you were God. Human as you are, you know the answer. You would be prone to wash your hands of the whole affair and say it's useless, I will not try again. But you are not God - and thanks be that God is not you. For this God in whom we love, and whom we believe, and whom we trust, is never the God of the last effort - is never the God of the last throw - is never the God who says this is it and beyond this I will not go. He is the God who is always willing to offer us something more. If He offers us the chance to believe, and we will not believe, then he says I will try to convince them in the face of their lack of faith. So what does God do? He says, Jesus give them the record - tell them now that your assignment is finished - tell them now in my plan you are coming back home; but also tell them this, that after you there will be something else: The Holy Spirit - The Holy Ghost - The Comforter - The Paraclete - or as the Scripture puts it for today - The Spirit of Truth. They have seen you, they have witnessed your ministry, they still do not believe - now tell them that even after you go away, I will send someone else. It is the Spirit of Truth that will

come into the world and the Spirit of Truth will come. Let me translate it for you in this way - not simply as the Helper, not simply as the Comforter, not simply as the Paraclete, not simply as The Holy Spirit - but after Jesus Christ, God will come as The Convincer to help you to believe what you have already seen. I like to think of it this way - as for myself I must tell you this - theologically speaking, I presume that I have wrestled more with the problem of the Trinity than with any other problem specifically in recent months, trying to understand. I have received some illumination and I would like to share it with you. God the Creator - that we understand because we know the world was made by a hand greater than ours. Jesus Christ in the flesh - we read the Sacred Page, we understand His life, we know that he lived historically, we are willing to accept it, are you? Wait a minute - suppose someone were to strip you of all your Christian context and framework and philosophy - suppose someone were to greet you at a gathering of people and say to you: Once upon a time, long long ago, in a far away land there lived a man born of humble stock, lived in an obscure village, he went around preaching, teaching and getting disciples - and this man told them who listened to him he was showing them the things of God - and this man said what some people said was blasphemy - he said if you see me, you see God. Now if you didn't have your Christian framework, if you had not been reared and trained in the Christian Faith - would you believe that? That if a man could stand up and say - if you look at me, you see God. But you do believe it, don't you? Sunday after Sunday you come to this place and you stand on your feet and you ought to say with a voice that rings - I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY AND IN JESUS CHRIST. You do believe it - and I say to you this

morning that is, in a certain sense, the miracle of miracles. That you and I, human beings, can say that we believe in God. For we are of this world, we are ^{finite} ~~highlight~~ and God is infinite - God is divine and we are human - God is eternal and we are of this present world - that you and I can come to know the mind of God - that you and I can come to understand the lines and love upon His face. That I say to you is the miracle of miracles. Don't you ever get side-tracked for the fact you can't believe such a thing as the feeding of the five thousand people - the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Far greater for me is the fact that I can believe that God is - that He loves me - that He sent Jesus Christ in the world to save me ^{from} ~~for~~ my sins - that when I die in faith believing, I shall go to be with Him and all whom I love in His name. Come now, how did you get that way? How did I get this way - Come now, how can I say that I believe and Jesus Christ is God? Well that's why this Sermon is being preached - to remind you that you did not get that way by yourself. You and I, nakedly, can never fully understand the mind of God - Jesus Christ came into the world to paint for us the unforgettable picture of God, and The Holy Spirit has come into the world to convince us that what Jesus Christ said is true, because He is true, because He is God. And I think now I begin to understand the Trinity a little bit better. God made the world, Jesus Christ came into the world to paint for us the picture of the fullness of God's Love and His Redeeming Grace and The Holy Spirit comes into my life to say it is true. None of us can understand the mind of God, save as we are enabled by the Spirit of Truth. It sounds reasonable doesn't it. Why should God's biggest problem be to get you and me to believe, for the simple reason that unless we believe in God as He is, we will never behave as we should - unless we believe that

God is Our Heavenly Father - we will never behave like the Sons of God. So the Spirit of Truth comes into my life, it envelopes my soul. The Spirit of Truth is God's abiding presence. The Spirit of Truth is Jesus Christ pleading with me to believe that God is true and all other things are ~~active~~^{the} and contrary to His Spirit. Beloved - this is our God - He made us - He loves us - He cares for us - and He sent His Son into the world to die for us. He has done everything that He can do for us and His problem seems to be this - Why don't you believe---why don't you believe? To help you, I will send you my Holy Spirit. You should ask yourself one more question. How can I tell if that Holy Spirit of God is at work in my heart? If I should know God better and believe in Him - perfectly and completely - how can it happen to me...The answer - as you want it to happen, so it will. If you really want God's Holy Spirit to be at work in your heart - The Holy Spirit will be at work in your heart. You are safe and the assurance can be yours as long as you want it. Maybe that's the prayer we better begin to pray....

"God, let Thy Holy Spirit guide and direct Us - I cannot trust myself."

Some of us awhile ago learned how to pray that prayer and it has made all the difference in our lives.

Raymond Shaheen

Sunday, May 11, 1958

"NO GREATER RESPONSIBILITY"

On this day that is recognized by some as the Festival of the Christian Home, I want to think with you upon a page of Scripture that I have usually found quite puzzling. It is recorded in the Second Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. You will recall it readily, I am certain. It is the account of the journey from Jerusalem to Nazareth after the celebration of the Passover. Every Jewish boy at the age of 12 looked forward to this Holy Trek. Now this experience was over, they would make their way back home. On the return journey the Christ Child became lost. Think of it! There was a time in the life of Jesus when Mary and Joseph did not know exactly where He was! I find this difficult to understand, for I am willing to believe that when God chose Mary as the fairest of the fair, a marked impression must have been made upon her life. Mary, who of all the people who have ever lived, of all the people who will ever live, no one shall ever have the favor that is now bestowed upon you, and no one shall ever have greater responsibility. Surely she must have kept saying this to herself again and again, for do we not remember her words in the Magnificat? Or take Joseph - did he not come to recognize that as the Christ Child stood by his side in the carpenter shop that His was the soul of a sweetly sensitive, spiritual child? Now, how could it be that they would ever allow a single day to pass without looking into His eyes, without clasping His hand, without putting Him to bed with a prayer? However, the Scripture has it that there was a time in the life of the Christ Child when He was allowed to become lost.

Ah, there are reasons for it, so they say. This one has been advanced: as they traveled by caravan it was not at all unusual for Him to be absorbed in the company of that endless group of cousins and all the other kin-folk. Then there are those who say that when a caravan was formed quite frequently the women would begin the journey a day ahead of the men. They traveled more slowly. The men would remain in the city and give themselves to whatever might concern them, then start a day later and soon

overtake the group. Of course, there are those who say that as the caravan was being formed, Mary and Joseph gave themselves to buying and selling in the city, getting certain provisions that they might want back in Nazareth, making the necessary farewells to people that they might not see for another year. As they gave themselves to this sort of thing, the caravan was being formed. Whatever reason you may advance, the fact remains, there was a time when the Christ Child was lost.

Now, I say to myself - ~~who~~ am I to take Mary and Joseph to task? When God smiles upon me as an individual, and He smiles upon my mate, He says to the two of us - there will be three of you; this child that I place into your life and into your love will come to you as something for which you will have no greater responsibility. To parents who present their child for baptism - in this custom into which I have happily fallen - I say: it can be said that God smiles broadly upon you as He allows you this child, yet with this privilege there is no greater responsibility; Here in this child, flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood, spirit of your spirit.

Then, we must remember that God deals in the irreplaceable. His specialty is individuality. What He places in your life and in your love has never happened before in this way - does not happen again. Any set of parents who have ever presented a child for baptism must remember this. As long as they live, they have no greater responsibility. Few things in the sight of God, it may be said, are more important than the nurturing and developing of the soul of a child. Now, when I remind myself of that, I say: who am I to take Mary to task or to sit in judgment upon Joseph, as one day they discovered that the Christ Child was lost, when I remember the days in my own life that have passed so quickly, when I have not always remembered that there are two people in this world for whom no one has greater responsibility than I?

So I want you this morning, if you will, to look upon this incident in the life of our Lord as a parable. Let it have symbolic interpretation for us. The Christ Child became lost. Now this thing could happen to you - it could happen in my home - if the same set of factors would be present as prevailed on that

road from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Take reason number one - Mary and Joseph were not together on that road. There was a time when they were separated, and in that interval it could be that at that time the Christ Child became lost. Now, take the parabolic interpretation of that - God says to two people: I need you both; if this child is to come into the world, both of you are necessary. Even so, if this child is to be reared and trained, it is an assignment that is best accomplished through the participation of both father and mother. I still need both of you, says God. Whatever the reason might have been that Mary and Joseph should not be together on that road, the fact remains that the child Jesus became lost at a time when Mary and Joseph were not together. Even so, the application of this truth for us - when parents are not together, the risk of a child straying is increased. I am not thinking particularly now of divorce or separation; I am thinking of what may occur ever more often than that - the fact that parents, while they may be in the same home may not be together in spirit or of one mind when it comes to a concern for the child. When parents are not together spiritually, emotionally, when they are not of one mind when they look upon the face of their child, any child suffers something.

Or now, if you want to say Mary assumed that the Christ Child was with Joseph - Joseph assumed that the child was with Mary - now give that a parabolic interpretation. Whenever anyone assumes anything in the life of a child for whom he himself has great responsibility, he is treading on dangerous ground. In the plan of God, it would seem to us that it was never intended that one parent should assume the total responsibility for the life of a child, and thus allow the other to be free. If this were not so, ~~then~~ could it not be that God would not have planned to recognize with so great priority the place of the family as a unit in the training of a child? It may not happen, but the risk is a very great one.

Now, take this other reason - they traveled together as a company, and since they traveled as a company, they assumed that others in the caravan were watching over

the child. I am wondering if any set of parents may ever permit themselves to believe that anyone else can be fully responsible for their children when God has placed this responsibility or this assignment on them. Let me give you a very pertinent and practical illustration right now. Here we are in this place now, to which we come back Sunday after Sunday, and some of us when we come bring our children with us. They are part of our company right now. While we are here they are in some other part of the Christian Education Building in Saint Luke Church. Fairly or unfairly, we assume right now that the nurture and development of the souls of our children is being cared for by somebody else. This is not meant to be uncomplimentary, for I have the fullest measure of faith in every single member of our Christian Education staff, yet what they are doing can be said is only second best. There is nothing finer than the association of God and His truth as it comes through the life and the lips of a child's parents. I would repeat - you may have every reason to believe that your child is quite safe when you entrust him spiritually to Saint Luke Church, but I am constrained to tell you that this is not to suggest that any of us can fail to fulfill the role in the life of that child which God intends to happen through the parents. The child Jesus became lost on the way - - who knows, because Mary and Joseph assumed that He was being taken care of by somebody else.

Then maybe there is this other answer: they had to get provisions in Jerusalem, they had to stock up. This matter of merchandising had to be attended to. They had also to make their farewells - to make sure that the proper contacts were still kept intact. This was their last trip to the Holy City until another year. Parabolically, of course, we say to ourselves - we must be kept busy buying, selling, making the right contacts in order to get on the road. I would not belittle Mary and Joseph in any way - Heaven forbid - but if any set of parents become so busy getting "on the way", that in such pre-occupation a situation should exist where a child fails to receive the attention that should be his - - - . You might as well hear this, my friend: of all the sermons that I have ever preached from this sacred desk, I have never been more uncomfortable than I am right now, for while I stand here as your Pastor,

I am also a parent. I remember how once - and then again - we stood and someone named both of them for Jesus Christ. We, too, were instructed that we had no greater responsibility. When I think of the days when I have been so busy - when I think of the days when I have unfairly assumed that someone else was assuming an obligation that should have been mine - when I think how I have excused myself - my soul fairly shudders. When, by the grace of God, I stand by the Great Gate, several questions may be put to me. One of them could be this: what now about all those souls in Messiah's Lutheran Church in South Williamsport that I asked you to shepherd in my name, for whom I made you responsible? Or, there is the other question: what about the souls in Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church in Silver Spring - that people whom I asked you to shepherd in my name? If I am made uneasy by these questions, then my soul surely will cringe when I am confronted by this question: what about the souls of those two boys, for whom you have no greater responsibility?

May 15, 1958

THOUGHTS ON ASCENSION DAY

It is very proper that we should gather here today to mark this significant event in the life of our Blessed Lord. We do not do Him justice if when we think of His ministry, we begin with His birth and end with either the Crucifixion or the Resurrection Garden. Beyond that quiet morning our Blessed Lord continued His ministry. The Gospel record, even as the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, tells of the Ascension. Sunday by Sunday when we recite the Creed, we refer to the Ascension as an integral part of His ministry. So we observe it today, and what is the sober reflection that comes to us.

First of all, we see in the Ascension a "mission accomplished." From Heaven above Christ Jesus came to earth. What our Heavenly Father had in mind for Him has now been accomplished. To Heaven above Jesus Christ returns. What a tremendous sense of satisfaction there is in knowing that one has fulfilled God's intention for His life. That is the first thing that should come to each of us today. As Christians we have a right to believe that God has a plan for each of us, and in whatever period of time that is allotted to us God expects us to live the dedicated life so that when we come to the end of our earthly journey, we may be able to look upon our going to Heaven in the light of "a mission accomplished."

Another thought that comes quickly to mind on Ascension Day is that from that time onward the disciple band knew exactly where Jesus Christ was or is. You see, human as they were they must on occasion have asked themselves, "I wonder where Jesus is now. Will he come back to visit us, and when?" So great an impression had He made upon them, now their thoughts of Him would not be ^{confined} ~~confined to any~~ to any particular village or hamlet. In Heaven above He would be, to use a phrase, equal distance from every one of us.

The third thought that we may cherish lies in the fact that they not only knew

exactly what He would be doing. Seated at God's right-hand, He serves as intercessor. We make our prayers, you see, through Jesus Christ. There is comfort in that thought. Every time I fall upon my knees, I can think that Jesus Christ is acting as my prayer priest, and when words come haltingly, or I find them inadequate, I can, with a pure heart, say "O God, hear the prayer that Jesus Christ makes in my behalf. Hear His words." On the other hand, when bewildered and confused and I know not for what to ask or pray, it means much to me to know that I may ask God to hear the prayer that Jesus Christ is making for me. If I cannot trust my own wisdom, then in faith I may trust His. This, as you know, is a principle very dear to those of us in the Protestant tradition. We need not rely upon the intercession of the Saints. Ours is the privilege of praying directly to our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Then, too, one must remember that He who sits at God's right-hand, sits there as one who will be part of the Judgment. When God makes His decision concerning you and me, ours is an advocate in Christ. He who spent 33 years on earth acquainting Himself with the trials and tribulations of this ^{world is} ~~world~~ no God separated from His people. This God who renders the Judgment through His Son Christ Our Lord has had traffic with us. Ascension Day helps me to remember that my Lord and my Saviour will enter His plea of mercy in my behalf.

There is one parting thing to be said, and that is that Ascension Day impresses upon the fabric of my heart that Jesus Christ, having ascended into Heaven, is fully occupied with what is for Him the most important single thing in the world --- to keep a watchful eye upon my soul. His is the perfect vantage point in Heaven above. This I most certainly believe.

The sermon is entitled, "As Good Stewards". The text is from the Epistle for the day, I Peter, the 4th Chapter, the 10th Verse: As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

It would seem to me that the way to really appreciate this text is to begin at the end, to work from the back toward the front. The key word, by the way, in this text is "grace". "By the manifold grace of God." I would submit to your attention that the word "grace" should not be a strange one in the vocabulary of the Christian; a word that ought to be even so often upon your lips and your mind should be this word "grace". If you would permit me the privilege, if right now that word "grace" as a part of the vocabulary of a Christian is a bit hazy and fuzzy for you, then I must tell you that you have yet to come into a full appreciation of the meaning of the Christian life. No one can consider himself a true Christian unless he knows the meaning of this word "grace", for by grace are ye saved and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ.

That word "grace", my friend, if I may put it for you as simply as I can, means, "unmerited faith which God has toward me." Or I can put it for you in another way: An abiding smile on God's face in my behalf. Or, I can put it for you this way: God always kindly disposed towards me. My situation may change. I may love you today. I may not serve you tomorrow. I may make certain promises one morning (?), but by eventide I can forget all about them. I may vacillate, but this attribute of God remains constant; regardless of my behavior, God is always kindly disposed towards me. And when his hand is outstretched, the palm is never empty. There is always something that God is waiting to give and to bestow upon me.

That is what that word "grace" means, and, of course, as you know, it has its fullest and deepest significance in the life of Jesus Christ who has come into the world to redeem me, a lost and condemned creature, not by my silver and gold, not by

any merit on my part, but because of what he is, he comes to redeem me.

The way to appreciate the meaning of this text is to begin at the end and to work forward. I repeat, the keyword in this text is "grace". God always giving; God always kindly disposed towards me. That should not be difficult for a Christian to understand. It ought not to be difficult for a Christian to believe, for what have we that we have not received? Life -- talent -- each fleeting moment is God's gift. None of us can make a of life (?) We may transmit the germ of life, but even the germ of life comes by God's .

What have we that we have not received? Says Peter: Because I know that to be true, I have something to say to you people. God's grace is yours; what you cannot earn; what you do not deserve -- God gives. This is what I want to tell you: Since you are recipients of God's favor, you are in duty bound to take good care of it, and as a Christian then you should see yourself as a steward.

Now that is the second word in this text which is very important to the vocabulary of the Christian, that word, "steward". Originally, in the Anglo Saxon it meant 'the keeper of the king's stock. Someone who was charged with the responsibility to take care of something that did not belong to him.' The right of ownership was in somebody else's hand, but the owner saw fit to entrust it to his people. And as long as he was in charge, he was in duty bound to take care of it. That word "steward" then -- keeper, caretaker, someone to whom someone has entrusted something.

Now, says the Apostle Peter, God smiles upon you. God gives you something; he gives it to you only that you will take care of it for him. I am wondering if it isn't true to say that in a certain sense you can never divorce the gift from the giver. Any man who really receives a gift from somebody else must find looming upon the horizon of his thought, the portrait of the giver. You cannot divorce the gift from the giver. For those of us who sometimes receive special gifts, in the back of our mind we say, What if some day the person who gave me this should make inquiry? What if he would say to me, What have you done with it? What if he should ask, Have you put it to profitable use? Whether we care to accept it as a matter of courtesy or not, the fact

remains that somehow, somewhere, it can be said that the giver has a kind of claim upon the gift. For a gift is always something that we cannot earn; we may not deserve it.

Says Peter That is what I am trying to tell you people. God, because he is gracious, gives you life. And he has never responsibility to somebody except the person to whom he has given it. We have a right to believe that some day he will make claim on that life and yours and mine is the responsibility to take good care of it.

Did you ever ask yourself the question, Why did the saints behave the way they did? Why did they live as they lived? In a restless night I thought I had a conversation with the Apostle Peter, even as the sermon was taking shape and form. And this is what I thought I heard him say: You know, Preacher, I have a right to speak when I share this text with Christian folk, folk who have got to that when you take something from the printed page, its significance lies not only in the syllables that you read, but also in the life throb, the pulsation of the heart of the man who wrote those words. By your leave, preacher, I would like to tell you something. I know what I am talking about when I talk about the grace of God. I know what I am talking about when I ask that ye be a good steward. You see, I am speaking out of my own experience. There was a time in my life when Jesus Christ came and touched me. Had he not come to me, I would never have known Him. You know that to be true, don't you?

When Jesus Christ called to Peter -- Grace, you see, this God who makes the overture, this God who comes to me; This God who offers me the beckoning finger -- Peter said, From that time onward it was my good fortune to have part in practically every important hour of his life. Transfiguration? I was there. Gethsemane? I was not too far away. Arrest? When they made him the criminal and took Him and tried Him, I was in the shadows. When they announced the resurrection, who ran like made to the Resurrection Garden? When he chose certain people after the resurrection to whom he would appear personally, I was there. On that glorious mount of Ascension, who ~~xxxx~~ saw

Him ascend? I was there. When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, who was made aware of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was I. Who stood up and preached by a power that I know came from Heaven above? It was I. Tell them when you preach that sermon that I who gave you the text knew whereof I wrote; I who received so much at God's hand.

It was I also who denied my Lord. It was I who did so much of the vacillating; I who made promises and didn't keep them. It was I -- if you want to tell them, you may -- there is that chap who has become a legend, you know, who when things became hot for Christians in Rome, I decided to run away even after all these wonderful things had happened to me, I had a way of converting to type. Then on the Alpian (?) way, I was confronted by that

and he said to me he was going back to Rome to be all over again. He caught me running away. As you know they say I turned and went back, but when the time came for me to die, I said I am not worthy to die as my Lord died. Tell them that.

Tell them that I am trying to tell you that I know what this thing is that is called the Grace of God. God always coming back to me; God always smiling upon me and saying, Begin all over again. I want you to know this: Whenever I remembered that, I felt constrained to tell people everywhere about God's love. When I remembered it, it seemed to me that life for me was full and free. When I remembered that I owed my life to Jesus Christ. I could see a difference, when I kept my life that way as one who had received souls. I felt myself in duty-bound to serve you and to love you, and when I asked his grace, then I would do thing. You tell them that when I talked to them about grace, I am Exhibit "A". God was always offering me his love even though I had denied him and run away.

Well, there is this to be said. This grace of God is yours. It comes as a gift, but this gift of this grace of God is yours to care for. It is simply given to you now. Some day there will be a reckoning and the claim will be made upon you.

It is always a delightful experience in the parsonage when at this time of the

year we invite the members of the graduating classes from the local high school who are members of Saint Luke Church to come and have breakfast on the parsonage lawn. It happened this morning for this year. As fine a group of young people as any Pastor would ever care to reading my mind. As we laughed and chatted, our conversation sometimes facetious, sometimes serious, sharing in those few minutes some of the things that are terribly important to them -- and as their Pastor I think in my own mind of the things should be terribly important to them. Let me tell you some of the thoughts that came to me:

Here you are, about to finish one chapter in your life. What path you may take after graduation I/~~#~~/ from high school I may not know, but this I do. You have been reared and trained in the faith. You have come to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. And I thought to myself, do they really know that for most people there are three choices when they ~~gxxxxxxmugh~~ consider life: They can use it to God's glory. They can mis-use it or they can abuse it. And I said to myself, But as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ they will have no business with the last two. It may be given to most people to have three choices, but to a Christian there is only one choice. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ~~XXXXXX~~ he is duty-bound to take this life that God gives him and to use it wisely and well; to take good care of it.

That leads me to the third part of the text as we work backwards. As everyone has received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.

God gives me grace. As the recipient I should take good care of it. And how do I best take good care of what God gives me? For the Christian, he must invest what God gives him in humanity. If God deals graciously with him, then he must deal graciously with his brother. That is the only way in God's sight you have a right to use your life, for your brother's good. I would say to you if when you come to the end of your term there was one single person in this world for whom life is not better because you have lived -- then I rest this judgment upon your soul -- your life has been lived in vain. God has given us life that we may keep it, and we keep it

only as we invest it in our fellowmen. No man's life is useless so long as one soul somewhere is better off because his life has touched yours.

As students of the manifold grace of God, you are to minister one to another. If you want to test sometime the vitality of your Christian faith, then find out how many people are being benefited because of your life.

I told you this before perhaps: It is translated different ways. It is the story of the devout Russian peasant who went to church one time. Falling prostrate he made this prayer: O, God, I would like to see the smile on the face of Jesus Christ. And all the time he made that prayer, he saw but one thing -- a parade of faces before him -- a march of humanity -- the maimed, the halted, the tortured, the diseased, the sinner and the sinned against. Every single man upon whose face there were any signs of lines depicting need were parading in front of him. Of course the meaning of the illustration is this: If you want to see the smile of God's face, then you have to look where Jesus Christ is looking upon those who are in need, and when you identify yourself with those who are in need, then it is that you see the smile of God's face.

I once told this, that if I was an artist picturing the gate of Heaven, I would make that gate very, very narrow, allowing an entrance of one soul at a time. But I think I would add something else to that canvas now: The person who passes through that narrow gate is a man who has his hands stretched out behind him, and to that hand somebody else is clasping someone else's who has found the highway. Maybe that is the person who enters the gate of Heaven. Lord, I believe, and to prove my belief, look I found another along the way, and because of me and because of your grasp to me, he has found the way.

As every man has received the gift therefore minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. This is a Christian. A Christian is a man who acknowledges God's faith and who says, Because God is good to me, I will invest his goodness in humanity. Do you qualify?

Notes on a talk

Commencement: Lutheran Theological
Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

. . . . Raymond Shaheen

THIS MOMENT BEFORE ~~DAWN~~ ^{God}

(Notes on the talk by Raymond Shaheen at
Gettysburg Seminary Graduation - May 29, 1958)

I cannot tell you whether it was in the morning - - - in the afternoon - - -
or in the evening. Nor can I tell you whether it was in the spring or the fall.
This is not important. This I can tell you, however, that it was a time in the
life of our Blessed Lord when he turned his back upon the Carpenter Shop in Nazareth
- - - never to return again. The hour had come when in the plan of God - he was to
be no longer the impressionable young adult in a Galilean Village but rather now one
who would confront the world.

With whatever sanctified imagination I can fashion, I can see Him now
as his fingers slowly stroked the smooth yoke ready for delivery. With admiration
he looked upon the Lintel which had been made for Joshua, Ben, Ezra - - - How proud
Joseph had been of Him. And the carpenter's son, soon to become itinerant preacher,
thoughtful of those who had passed from hither and yon - - to and fro - - - in
sickness and health - in joy or in sadness - amid all their fears, frustrations and
whatever faith that would control their lives.

His eye too must have on the bench he had last made - he could not
help but to recall the bitterness in the soul of the man who ordered it. His only
sone had run away from home. Even in the carpenter shop - he had spoken with a curse
upon his lips on the son who had wandered away.

Now in this moment, before God, Jesus Christ faces the future and if you
will allow me to say it the very hosts of heaven have focused their eye upon Him as
they raised the question - Look! This Is It! For it can be understood that his now
is God's answer to the problem perpetually perplexing to the mind of God and what
would you say that problem is? Quickly you might answer - the problem of getting
people to behave as God's children should behave - or you might say getting people

to love God as a Heavenly Father deserves to be loved. Either of these answers could be correct but it would seem to me now that this most certainly could be understood as that preplexing problem - - - getting people to believe in God - in His Way and in His Truth. Was not that why the prophets came and the patriarchs and the priest had their day. An now in due season, Jesus Christ - Gods answer to his problem of revelation and communication. Here now is one who could say - I am the way, the truth and the life.

I make bold to suggest that the very host of Heaven now focus their eye upon you - - - you have perhaps a five-year earlier start than He - - - you have now completed your preparation - - - you are now about to confront the world and I think I hear the host of angels saying - - - "WHAT NOW" - for this too is a moment before God as one begins.

My message to you is a very simple one as I would make a definite play upon these words. Hear them now.

What Now - - - this is a particular hour in your life - formal preparation has been completed - the prayers of the faithful, to this day at least have been answered to all intents and purposes who have fulfilled noble ambitions and desires. On the other hand, one recognizes the fact that this is a precise period in world history - perilously and critically fraught with much change and tension - it could be called the hour of confusion and to a degree the eye of the world is focused upon you as it raises the cry "WHAT NOW".

WILL YOU - the emphasis is upon the personal pronoun, for the contribution that you are about to make is a personal one. I would emphasize the fact that ~~this~~ is the essence of distinction in your contribution - for with all fairness it must be said that the truth which you will declare is not new - the message is not new - perhaps the technique and strategy is not new - but you are new - therein lies the crowning glory of your contribution. With complete candor I say to you. You may not

be the finest group of graduates - nor the best trained - this evaluation I cannot make but this I will say - you are the newest - you are the latest. Allow me to put it for you in this way - you are God's latest reinforcements - His most recent venture. In the face of God's great unfinished task - he now looks to you and so long as you live and breathe you are irreplaceable - a bit of God's unrepeated effort. There is none who can take your place. Others may come before you - - - others may follow you, but for this moment, this moment which is before God - - - You stand alone, and only you can speak and do what God waits to see you perform. One is reminded of an experience that Paul Scherer once had. He tells how he was asked to address a large gathering when KAGAWA could not appear. Standing before the great mass of people, he felt himself embarrassed and humiliated for he was standing there in place of Kagawa. He composed himself only as he remembered that in one sense he was not standing there in the place of Kagawa at all! He was standing there in the Name of Jesus Christ and Paul Scherer should speak in his behalf. So I say to you - WHAT NOW, WILL YOU - - -??

Ofcourse you catch the significance of it as the question continues - and by the way, it is the perpetual question WHAT NOW WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS CHRIST.

What now will you Do? You are called to produce your contribution must be an active one - there are satanic forces at work in the world. You are to be God's active agent. Some of us remember as a most impressionable experience here Bishop Ordass at Lund in 1947 - His words to us were "We must work while it is day - for what will happen if the forces of evil alone are at work in this world?"

What Now Will You Do With Jesus Christ. The preposition is important. You are to consider yourself a pardner with God - an instrument in His hands as long as you live and breathe - keep yourself in God's partnership. This is your crowning glory - this is your great privilege.

JUNE 15, 1958

PASTOR RAYMOND SHAHEEN

The Sermon is entitled, "ON THE MAKING OF EXCUSES". It is based upon the Gospel Lesson for today. The text is a portion of the 18th Verse of the 14th Chapter of the Gospel According to Luke - - - "and they all with one consent began to make excuse". You can't appreciate this text, my friend, unless you fit it over against another passage. Within this same Gospel Lesson, as you think of this one word, "and they all with one consent began to make excuse" think of this particular passage ends "that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper". Could it be as final as that? Could it be that Jesus Christ is giving us a picture of something exceeding wonderful - - - inviting people to attend. And then must we dwell with a sad and somber fact that there will be some people who will be rejected - - that there will be some people who will not enjoy this wonderful privilege - - Well there is the passage for you. There were those who were invited - there are those who made excuse and would not go. Then there is the final word, where the story ends as the host says, "I say unto you that those men who were invited shall not taste of my supper".

This also is the Gospel! Jesus Christ invites, and when he invites, he invites to some^{thing}/exceedingly wonderful. This also is the Gospel and maybe those who having been invited may not respond, and if they will not respond then they must experience rejection. If they are rejected, it is not Christ who rejects - they are rejected because they themselves choose to be left on the outside. Well now lets get back to where this Sermon ought to begin.

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse". It sounds

like collusion, doesn't it? As though they had all gotten together before hand and made up their collective minds. The one saying to the other - "Do you think it will be as interesting as last time?" - "I do not think so! "I do not wish to go"- and the other replies - "Neither do I". Or as this familiar talk continues, "Do you think so and so will be there?" "If he is planning to attend, I don't think I will go." On the other hand, it could be that the remark would be, "because he isn't going to be there, then the other might plan to attend. So each discusses the matter with the other and together they choose not to attend.

To really appreciate this, one must go back and take a look at the situation ~~that~~ existed in those days. Or better still, take a good glimpse at some of these verses which precede this Gospel Lesson for today. For you see this parable of Jesus was spoken as a reply to a man who made a sentimentally pious remark when the table conversation had become a bit embarrassing and irritating. Jesus in the company of the disciples had gone to be guest at a supper. In the course of the evening, someone had made a rather offensive remark to take the host "off the hook". Some well meaning chap said "Blessed are they who shall break bread in the Kingdom of Heaven". Surely that was cover strategy, for it took their minds away from the present moment and what could there be offensive in a conversation dwelling with Heaven? Remote and vague - no one could take issue on this score.

Now if there was anything that must have irked our Blessed Lord, it must have been people who spoke these general statements without realizing their full import - and so to this man he must have railed out against him in a kind of "That's what you think" or "That's what

you say" fashion. At any rate, he spoke this parable which in reality is

Let me really tell you something about that.

Once upon a time there was a man who invited a number of people to a supper in true oriental fashion. The invitations were extended in advance. Then when the time came ready for the supper to be served the host sent his servants to tell those who had been invited that supper time had come. The servant discovered that there were those who now begged off, although they had accepted previously they now declined to come.

There was the man who had purchased five yoke of oxen - the man who had purchased a tract of land - the man who had just gotten married. Each in turn began to make excuse. And as Jesus brings this parable to a close he says that none of these men who had been bidden was given a taste of this supper. It could be as terrible as all that. This Sermon, my friend, may not be tailor-fit to meet your condition. It could well be that in these remaining 16 or 17 minutes that you will have plenty of leeway to cast an eye upon any number of people other than yourself. But on the other hand, I dare say to you, that the truth of the test is tailor-fit to your soul, tailor-fit to mine as well. And I have already tried this Sermon on my own soul for size before I share it with you. For when it comes to making excuses - this is a matter that is applicable to every single one of us and when kept honestly in our souls, we read the Bible. We find here and there some reflection, some picture of ourselves,- chances are we would have reacted just as the people here in this parable reacted. Because I know you as well as I do, and because I know my own soul as well as I do - and chances are that were this thing re-

peated today - you and I would react very much as they did then and there. For human nature is human nature and until it is transformed by the grace of God - all of its frail characteristics are typical of every human being in every generation. "They all with one consent began to make excuse"....

As we reflect upon it now there are several things that we ought to say to ourselves - maybe it could well be that when the one heard the excuse of the other, he began to laugh to himself and to say - - "He expects the host to believe that about him". Collectively they made much the same excuse - but there came a time when the excuses had to be expressed individually. It could well be that each in turn laughed up his sleeve at the excuse of the other.

As we look at these excuses now, our first word for them must be downright ridiculous - and that adds to the folly of them, you see. Look at them as a case in point - here is the man who says I have purchased five yoke of oxen, he says he goes to purchase them for his excuse. Now no man would make a purchase like that without making ample testing and proof before he produced the cash. No Jew, especially, would ever buy anything like that without first knowing the character and integrity of his purchase. Here is the man who says - I have purchased a piece of ground. I can picture any man buying something, especially an acre of ground, walk over it - foot by foot - cover almost every square inch of it - with the pride of possession flowing through his veins - and doing all of this before hand, even before he so much as signed the deed. The excuse is downright ridiculous.

Now this last one of all of them - this is the most ridiculous - I have married a wife and I cannot come. My Father stemming from

Oriental stock, told me on one occasion that when he and my Mother were married - their wedding celebration went on for at least seven weeks - being invited to one festive occasion after another. Such was the fashion of the Near East. And in Bible Times, ~~any~~ man who got married was given a year's exemption from military service with the full understanding that he should stay at home - that he should be a companion to his wife - that they should get their family started. If any man should have been in a frame of mind to accept an invitation to a festive occasion, it was this man - but he too made his excuse and the word for his, as for the others - - - ridiculous. The second thing we may have to say is that an excuse is never valid - if it is a matter of being unwilling as over against being unable. Take the case in point again, the man who had purchased a piece of ground was quite able to make his survey. The truth of the matter is, he was unwilling to attend the supper because he was the man who purchased the five yoke of oxen was able to go and put them to the test. He did not attend the supper because he was unable, it was because he was unwilling. The groom who had all the time in the world, likewise did not attend the supper; not because he was unable but because he was unwilling. Now this is the point that must try to vex your soul and mind. It is because, as the Pastor, that I am in duty bound and willing so, to have nothing but love in my heart for your soul that I speak to you the way I do this morning. I am not speaking sarcastically, but this I must tell you that this Sermon is meant for each of us. Each of us knows himself so well that he has run the risk again and again of refusing what God offers - - not because we are unable to accept what God offers but because we are unwilling for the nurturing of your soul - - Let me suggest a chart now by which one can take

self examination. The major premise to be kept in mind is God is constantly calling us to accept something at his hand. God is the great invitor. God's first word to each of us is always Come - - Receive - - and when I look at the examination blank for the nurturing of my own soul I find as No. 1 - God says to me - I invite you to enjoy solely the blessing that belongs to those who put their trust in me. These can be guaranteed to you if you accept my invitation to teach - - to teach others My Way - - to teach children - - to teach in Saint Luke Program of Christian Education. There are those who do not, and if they should not, two blanks remain for one's consideration. Is it because I am unable - or is it because I am unwilling? God says to every set of parents - I give you this child - I invite you to share my joy in seeing this child grows up and the knowledge of spiritual truths. I invite you to teach this child. There are those who accept and there are those who do not. The two blanks remain - check one please. Is it because I am unable or because I am unwilling. Jesus Christ says I invite you to have a concern for all the needy - - the down-trodden - - the underprivileged of the world. Jesus Christ says I invite you to have a concern for the reprobate and the sinner. That yours may be the joy that the hosts of the Angels know when a single sinner enters the gates of Heaven. There are those who must answer one or two blanks. This I refuse to know because I am unable or I am unwilling. God says I invite you to know the joy that belongs to those who practice the stewardship of time, talent and treasury. He invites you to the great joy of knowing what it is to tithe. To give a portion of your income that others may know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If I should fail to know this joy which He promises ~~to~~ and to which he invites, is it because I am unable or

I am unwilling. The two catagories - and it could be as simple as all of that.

My Sainted Predecessor in Messiah's Church at South Williamsport was a veritable man of God, as kind hearted a patriarch as I have ever seen in the Christian Ministry. His soul was warm and gracious. Once he met a preacher's son, a practicing physician, in the corridor of the hospital - he said to him, "Tell me, Dr. Born, you don't get to Church very often do you? I suppose you are one of those doctors who says he doesn't have time?" Dr. Born always radical, and radicals have a way of speaking the truth, truth that hurts only because it has a right too - he said to my Sainted Predecessor, "Well a man usually has time for the things that he wants to do"

It could be in this matter of excuse making there are some excuses that we would never make if we really wanted to do something. It is because I am your Pastor that I must speak to you in this way. I have no choice.

I am constrained to lay before you something that irritates and vexes my soul and it is this - that if a man should in this world persist in the pattern of making excuses habitually, refusing to accept the best that God has to offer in this world - he runs the terrible risk of standing in that moment of the Great Day when Jesus Christ says now I invite you to the best of all blessings even Heaven itself - and the man who is prone to make excuse because he is a man might in that moment beg off and prefer something else - Even to Heaven Itself.....

PERFECT LOVE - June 22, 1958 - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The Sermon is entitled "PERFECT LOVE". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the 17th Verse of the 4th Chapter of the First Epistle of John.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we
may have boldness in the day of judgment;
because as he is, so are we in this world."

I'm not so sure that you can really appreciate this text until you try to surround it with some kind of picture. Come now and help me, will you. It could well be that a young disciple of Our Blessed Lord had heard about "John, the Aged" - an old, old man who had enjoyed the privilege and the responsibilities of discipleship - now facing the sunset slope of life his reputation had gone hither and yon and people had come to revere him, even as they had come to love him, and not a few of these people who had come into the Christian Faith looked upon him as a kind of Father Confessor. They were willing to go to him - to lay bare their souls, to earnestly hope and pray that per chance he, in the name of Christ, would speak to them the word of forgiveness - that by having contact with him they could be renewed and restored and better able to face life itself. So I think one of these disciples must have come to him and I think he must have said, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned". The old man quietly, calmly, with the peace that comes with age, says to him - "Name your sins". And the young disciple begins to name them: "Ugly, cruel, unkind, vicious, downright diabolical". Without hesitation he names his sins. He names the sins of the flesh - he names the sins of omission - the things now that he knows he should not have failed to do. He names the things he has done that he knows are not pleasing in God's sight. He willingly brings out in front of the old man, for he has

come to look upon him as a man schooled in the ways of God - knowing more about the ways of God than the ways of man. He is willing to tell him of all the sins to which a young man is prone to commit. All of this thing which becomes a part of the experience of life - the doing of certain things - if in the doing, in the days of our youth they happen for only one reason they should never happen again. And then as he lifts all his sins - there was a kind of postscript - a type of after-thought - "Ah yes, Father, I think I should also say - there is brother so and so - I do not like him, in fact I think maybe I should say I hate him. And then much to his surprise the Father in the Faith, the one to whom he had gone as a Father Confessor, glosses over these painless sins, these grievous sins, that the world would look upon him - he hardly says a word about the terrible sins of the flesh - but he says to this young disciple, "You hate someone - there is a fellow human being for whom you have hate in your heart? Come now, you take the name of Jesus Christ, you say that you love God, how can you say you love God whom you have not seen, if your brother whom you see, you hate". The disciple is shaken, ofcourse, as well he should be shaken. Disturbed to the depths of his soul because he hadn't said a word to anybody else that he hated this man - he hadn't peraded the fact in public. He had never gone to the man with his hands as though he would choke him to death. He had never laid hold upon him and dragged him in the dust of the street. With this hate swelling up in his soul for this man it could be that with some cause he could have brought charges and had him thrown into jail - and that he had never done - and so you see he did not think that this was a very important sin.

But the old man, wise in the ways of God, "just a moment, my son, you have faith in your heart, how can you say you love God if you hate

your brother?" Then he gave him to understand, I think, "Disciple you have come desiring absolution because you would continue to take the highway that leads to God - you would cherish in your soul the hope of Heaven. I want to tell you something, there is a love that is made perfect and by a love that is made perfect you may be able to stand with boldness in the day of judgment - because as He is, so are we in this world?" And that gave it an entirely different complexion, you see. This now is a matter of life and death as far as my soul is concerned, for every man must face the judgment. And the old, old man, wise in the ways of the things of God takes this man - this disciple to task. Hate what is God - John has given us those three words which constitute a single sentence. A perfect and a complete sentence - a sentence which reveals the very nature of God - and once the sentence is spoken there is no need to say any other word about God - God is love.

Now this morning think for a moment with me will you about this matter of boldness in the day of judgment. This is a strange thing to talk about - love making a man bold. We shy away from the word "bold". We have no particular affection for people who are as bold as brass. There is that word, and dare one believe that when the time of judgment comes he can stand boldly before God - we who know our sins - we who have a way of letting them parade themselves in front of us even we go to bed at night. Can I hope that when the day of judgment comes I can stand boldly in the presence of God. Dare I cherish that thought. Well here is that passage of scripture for you "Herein is love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment". And the Greeks had a word, that word boldness _____, which means frankness - to speak freely -

and if you will allow a very free and easy translation or interpretation I would say, to be able to be at ease in the presence of God. Do you believe that that could happen to you - when at the day of judgment you could be at ease in the presence of God. The Beloved John says you can - if you have Perfect Love - for God is love and he who has love in his heart should feel at home in the presence of God. If this is the character of God and then this becomes my character - then there is a kind of identity that is established when the two of us meet. Here is a man who works for his superior - the superior has gone away and then the superior returns - he waits now to receive some kind of an account from the man who has been in charge. If the employee is to be at ease in the presence of his superior, how can he do it - simple my friend, if knowing the character of his superior he has conducted his business in his superiors' absence in a manner that becomes the character of his superior, if he has discharged the obligations of the business as the superior would have conducted it had he been there, then with ease he can appear before this man because he has acquitted himself as this man would have conducted the thing himself. God is love and when the time of judgment comes I appear before Him with love in my heart - if I have treated my fellowman as God - through Christ would have treated them in the person - then with boldness I can stand before God. But you ought to ask the question. The Beloved Disciple said, "Herein is our love made perfect that with boldness we may be able to stand in the day of judgment" - How does one know this perfect love by which he is enabled to stand? And the question is a good one. Furthermore it is a very necessary question for that word love, you see, is qualified. The man who is made fit to stand in the presence of God is a man who has Perfect Love, and you can underline that word perfect. There is no word in all our vocabulary that suffers so great abuse because of misuse than

than that four-letter word, L O V E. It can mean almost anything to anyone and he may make the meaning of the word as he chooses. A reprobate who takes any kind of a woman that he can get and befiles her character and says he loves her - Ah, he uses the word love, doesn't he? And he knows what he means by it. Here's a man who comes to the great moment in life when he sees his mate complete her earthly journey. They have lived years together and the last thing that she hears him say to her is this "I have always loved you, faithfulness and devotion - integrity of a good character - that too is a word love, isn't it? And then when we are constrained to look into the face of God as we see the drooping head of Jesus Christ upon Calvary's terrible hill and we say this is love personified in death - this is God stooping to earth - because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. We say this too, is love - Ah, there are many kinds of love. It's an unfortunate thing that in the English world we take the four letters and we make them mean almost anything that we want to make them mean. We should be eternally grateful that when the Apostle John wrote about a love by which we can be made bold to stand in the day of judgment, he qualifies it and he said be sure that you understand it as "Perfect Love". Now what kind of love is Perfect Love. Maybe the Greeks can help us. And in a smaller group one time you may remember how I shared with you that lesson in Greek. The Greeks were wise enough to have three different words for this one word - love. There is a love that's called Eros in the Greek - it's love that a person has for a thing or a person because of the satisfaction that comes to him in return. He loves this particular person because of the satisfaction that person brings and he goes on loving that person as long as there is satisfaction in the picture and the love will cease as soon as there is no longer satisfaction. It doesn't confine itself simply to a person, it can be a love that comes

with the pursuit of a position, an ambition, science, learning, someone with a hungry and thirst for achievement in some kind of an area or field or enterprise, and he pursues it as long as in the pursuit his ego is being satisfied. There are some people who even love God because in the pursuit of God their ego is being satisfied. Now this may be a good thing but it is not "Perfect Love" and the Greeks said there's another kind of love that exists between people - it's the kind that is born between mutual dependance - I love you because you love me - and it's easy for me to love you because you love me - and I will go on loving you because you go on loving me - It's the love that exists between ~~the~~ a man and wife, between two people in a business partnership, between two people like David and Jonathan. A give and take proposition in contrast to the first type of love which is always a take. But then one day the world discovered the shadow that was cast upon the face of the earth by Jesus Christ. They had never seen anything like it before. Here was someone who was always motivated by activated good will - who was always looking at someone and saying to himself - "Now what can I do for you?" How can I make life better for you - Yea, what is more, how can you become a better person because of me? How can I give myself to you and that kind of conduct, that kind of demeanor wound up one black night on a Hill and all the time this was something being given - nothing being taken away - always something being given, something being given, and the Greeks said why we have never seen anything like this - there isn't a word in our vocabulary for it and so they coined a brand new word and they called it _____. A kind of love that knows nothing about taking and grabbing. A kind of love that knows nothing about interpersonal relationship and mutuality and dependance between people - but a kind of love that is always giving and giving and giving - sacrificing

even to the point of _____. This my friend, is love that can be called "Perfect Love". And the old man said when you have that kind of love then you will be able to stand with boldness before Jesus Christ and this love can be made perfect as we become in this world as Jesus Christ was.

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
 Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
 And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
 Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
 An angel writing in a book of gold;
 Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold:
 And to the presence in the room he said,
 "What writest thou?" The vision rais'd its head,
 And with a look made of all sweet accord,
 Answer'd, "The names of those who love the Lord".
 "And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
 But cheerily still; and said "I pray thee, then,
 Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."
 The angel wrote and vanish'd. The next night
 It came again, with a great wakening light,
 And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,
 And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world". How fortunate that you know the answer. How exceeding wonderful that each of us has the guide and the pattern - How exceedingly glorious that Jesus Christ came into the world to show us how we could be to every other man - as Christ.

JUNE 29, 1958

PASTOR RAYMOND SHAHEEN

The Sermon on this Saints Day is entitled WHEN GOD BREAKS THROUGH. The text is from The Epistle for the day, the 7th Verse of the 12th Chapter of the Book of The Acts of the Apostles -

"And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands."

It is a good thing to have in the calendar of the Church such things as Saints Day. Because you see, again and again they call our attention to some of these folks who shine out with a glory a little bit more than ours. A peculiar glory and radiance that is truly distinctive. Perhaps we had better satisfy our minds at once and ask the question and wait for the answer - just who is a Saint anyway. As you may know in the Roman tradition a person is never given the title Saint unless it can be proven that somewhere, at sometimes in his life, there had been a miracle performed in connection with his name or with the influence that has come from his life - and above all else, that this person has been more than an ordinary person in the faith. An exemplary character - one, if you will, whose radiance has been truly distinctive.

For our purposes this morning we shall not use such classifications for a Saint. We shall not say that this person is not a Saint unless you can prove to me that a miracle has been performed in connection with his ministry while he lived - or perhaps with his influence for good following his earthly pilgrimage. The name Saint, the title rather is given here and there to those who having loved the Lord Jesus Christ had a faith of devotion higher, if you please, or deeper than yours and mine. One ought not to forget, nor pass over lightly, the child's definition for a

Saint. Who when he was in the Church looked at the stained glass windows and he saw some of the titles on the windows: Saint Matthew, Saint Peter, Saint Paul - and as he looked at the window, he said aloud, "I wonder why they call them Saints?" And shortly thereafter he answered the question for himself when he said, "Maybe it's because they were people through whom the light could shine". A good answer my friend. A Saint is one for whom the light of God's love, the light of God's truth shown perhaps with a glory not ordinarily found in other folks. Well be that as it may - today we remember Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The meditation is based upon an incident on the life of one of these men - Peter by name. Oddly enough when on this Saints Day we come to remember him, I shall ask you to think of him - in jail. God's Saint in jail - well this is the background.

The name Herod is associated with the most cruel and the ugliest of kings. We remember, ofcourse we do, that when our Blessed Lord came to this earth, there was a king by the name of Herod who issued that terrible edict - the slaughter of the innocence. Here is Herod taking out a particular vengeance against the Cause of Christ. He does not like him - he is the tool of Satan. He has taken a man by the name of John, a wonderful leader in the Church and has killed him with the sword. It pleased the Jews very much. So he says to himself, "Now for a feather in my hat, I'll get their outstanding leader, this man called Peter - I shall then demoralize this minority group. If I take their leader and throw him in prison, then we shall see what will happen with this uncomfortable minority. He issued the order. Peter was taken and cast into prison. One reads these words - four quaternions of soldiers, four platoons, four men each - sixteen men were ordered by the king to guard this man. One man a leader of the minority group - and Herod says, "Make the watch secure and certain, use sixteen men to keep him there". Sixteen men to keep one man in jail.

Herod had had enough business with the Christian Cause to allow himself to believe that always looming upon the horizon was this mysterious hand - ready to reach in at the opportune moment and clutch from his grasp something unusually precious in the sight of God. And I think that this is the reason why he said, "This time I'll put sixteen men to guard him". So Peter is in jail. Sixteen men watching him. The Good Book tells us that at night while he slept an angel came and a great light was caused to shine in the prison cell. Peter says, "I thought it was a vision and this angel says to me, 'Get Up'". He had been bound hand and foot - these chains fell from his hands and his feet. Put on your sandals, put on your garment - follow me. And as a matter of historical record, he passes from one prison keeper to another. He is delivered from the prison and he follows the vision until the angel vanished and then he goes to the house of his friends and when he gets to the house of his friends, the servant who answers the door is completely overcome by joy, she keeps him waiting and she says that Peter is here and they say you are mad. And when Peter gets on the inside, what do you suppose he discovers? A Prayer Meeting in session. Now don't forget it, that is a very important part of this picture. A Prayer Meeting in session. Peter was thrown in jail - a Saint in jail - that is significant. God, it seems to me, does not delight in allowing people who know Him and to love Him to go off into some corner all by themselves and allow the rest of the world to go by. Peter was where he was because he had been out with people. He had been in the village square, he had trafficked with all the people in that community, he had rubbed shoulders with them, he had done business with them. There is no such thing as a Saint who becomes a Saint because he withdraws himself from the world. There may be times when he may have to do it, but he does not become a Saint because he stays withdrawn in a crisis.

George Franklin Dunkleberger, one of the teachers in my college days, in a course in Social Physiology, told us about a man that he had met in the pages of a book. In some Far Eastern Country there was a religion that permitted their adherents to believe that they became virtuous only as they separated themselves from the world. Here was a holy man who said, "I want to become virtuous". He turned his back upon the world and sat in a narrow cell of his own choosing. Some friends would come and give him a few figs a day. Miraculously he kept himself alive on that basis and when they would come to see him - always the figure of contemplation and meditation - the rest of the world with all of its evils was on the outside. This for them was a picture of a Saint. Nowhere in all Christendom do you get such a picture of a Saint. On no single page of this New Testament will you find that such standards upheld and proclaimed.

Peter, the Saint, had been with people. He had rubbed shoulders, he had trafficked with Him, because in the midst of the world - he had stood his ground for Jesus Christ they threw him where they did. That is a healthy thing for any of us to remember - that Saints are to be found where people live. Now in this world in which we are a part, there is always this anti-Christ force. We want to work for God - there are pressures and tensions that would distract us and work against us - and here is this force working against a Saint and so because of it he is thrown into prison. Now what happens when one of God's Saints gets into jail? The Sermon is entitled "When God Breaks Through". God never has done with his Saints - God has a way of intervening - God has a way of coming to them. Oh, not always will he lead them out physically, but always will he be able to free them spiritually. Now two things happen when God breaks through to his Saints. The text says there was a great light that shown upon him. Ah, there you have it. No matter where a man may be if he belongs to God and he puts his dedication to God uppermost - God has

a way of coming to him and when he comes he shines upon him with a light of his truth. That has freed more than one man spiritually while has been confined behind prison walls and doors. Bishop Hans Lilje of our Lutheran Church in Hanover, Germany, tells how when he was in prison, he kept himself always mindful of the fact that God's light was shining upon him. Oh, they tried to do this, they tried to take his mind and put it upon other things. They did not hide from the prisoner the agonizing cry from the torture chamber - they did not hide from the prisoner the stain of blood upon the floor of the prison cell. They did not turn off the light at night - the light burned constantly. Many, many things they thought they would do to focus the prisoner's mind upon this thing or that thing - the terrible diabolical hand of the enemy and the persecutor. The thing that kept him sane is the thing that kept him healthy spiritually was/^{always}remember God shine upon me. If you want to read something thrilling sometimes, a welcome refreshment from a lot of trash that comes in present day novels, you ought to read some day, "Unwilling Journey" which is an account of a faithful devoted Lutheran Pastor in Germany who was taken into the prison camp at Siberia. And as he accounts for his experiences in his diary he tells how again and again other people around him were being demoralized - but day by day he asked for the light of God's love and the light of God's truth to shine on him and as that happens^{ed} he kept himself a free man despite his bondage.

Saints may be in prison and when God breaks through he comes through first of all by shining with the light of His love and His truth upon us. You would expect me to say this wouldn't you rather philosophically now, - but not all the prisons of the world are made by brick and stone and bars. There are these prisons that we make for ourselves in which the body may be free in the world and the mind and the heart are in prison. In prison by hate, in prison by jealousy, in prison~~by~~ sin, in prison

by prejudice. These are the walls that sometime we erect for ourselves. A wall of prejudice around the man's mind is there because he has either erected it or allows it to be there. All the hate around a man's heart is there because he has either built it or he allows it to remain. Man was never meant to be kept in prison by hate, envy and sin. God wants to break through those bars too. Those bars fall down to the ground, they disintegrate when the light of God's love and his truth is seen. Second thing the text tells us is when God breaks through his light not only shines upon the prisoner but he is also given a challenge to do something even in prison. The angel came to Peter in prison and said, "Stand up, get going". A call, if you please, to some kind of activity.

In the providence of God, I have opportunity sometime as a Pastor to minister and counsel to men who must be confined behind prison walls - I do not take that responsibility lightly. On occasion I have told them this - you may not walk out with me and these walls so secure will remain - you are here, but there is no wall of brick or stone that can keep you confined spiritually - no brick, no stone can ball up your heart. And while you may be here and as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ think upon yourself spiritually as a free man - free to think, free to dream, free to pray, free to build a life anew.

In prison a message of the Lord came to Peter and said, "Come now, there is something I want you to do. Philosophically speaking, whenever God breaks through to any man he says, "Stand Up". God is not content with idle souls. This Sermon could end here, but it doesn't - there is more to be said. How this miraculous release took place I cannot tell you - I only know that it did. Whether God used the prison keeper - whether God used men who were on his side, inside the prison, to release

Peter - that I cannot tell - I only know that God intervened and Peter said it was the hand of God. When Peter got on the outside he went to the house of his friends and when he found his friends he found them on their knees - a prayer session was taking place. That is a very important part of this story. Saints are made through the prayers of people. Saints are kept faithful through the prayers of people. A Saint is never a self-made man. A Saint is a man who responds to the Grace of God easier, because he is being lifted up in the arms of other people's petitions. A very, very important part of this story - God breaking through to save a Saint is the fact that there were his friends who were praying for him. Saints do not fall full-fashion from Heaven. They grow.

By the way, I must ask you this question - how many Saints have you helped to make? How many people do you suppose there are who are completely devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and they're kept that way because you pray for them. I once said to a young man who came to me on the threshold of his ministry - calling him by name - I wanted him to know that he had to be a good and faithful servant to his Lord - surely because his Lord expected him to be faithful - but because I said to him, because every time you go to the pulpit there are people who are going to pray for you - there are going to be people in your parish who will never allow night to pass without taking your name in prayer - that is the only way some people stay to the road - not because of their own strength - not because of their own inclination - there are some people who stay to the road because there are folks who are lifting them up in the arms of their petitions.

It grieved me, as I am sure it must have grieved you, to read in the paper this past week that our beloved Bishop Ordass in Hungary has

been removed from his Bishopric and is suffering once more persecution. I met him for the first time in 1947 - I saw him again in Minneapolis this past summer. In those 11 years, in those 10 years so much had happened: removed from his Bishopric - thrown in prison - confined to his home - not allowed to preach. Unashamedly I tell you that when I was privileged to shake his hand it was not easy to keep the tears from flowing - for I said to myself, "This is a Saint". - Whose hands had been folded in prayer - whose very hands have gone and done their knitting that through some meager income he could keep the table spread for his devoted wife and himself. Then I thought how the President of our Church, Dr. Franklin Clark Frye, said to a group of us one time, that if when he finished his devotions at night, he did not include the name of Bishop Ordass he felt as though some one were tugging at his hand and saying - back to your knees again, there is a Saint who needs your prayers.

How many Saints have you helped make? How many miracles have you helped to see performed through your prayers? There isn't anything better that you can do for anyone than to pray for him - and when you cannot do anything else - YOU CAN ALWAYS PRAY.

RS/MP

July 2, 1958.

AN OBLIGATION UNDER GOD - July 6, 1958 - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

On this Sunday nearest Independence Day, the Sermon is entitled "AN OBLIGATION UNDER GOD". The text, Verses 1 and 2 of Psalms No. 67.

"God be merciful unto us and bless us, and
cause his face to shine upon us, that thy
way may be known upon earth, thy saving health
among all nations".

One wonders at first, whether or not, this text, a part of this very significant Psalms, is a solitary voice of a man or whether it could be the collective thinking of the people of His day. You see, Israel had enjoyed what appears to be unparalleled prosperity. In the mind of some people at that time, they could not recall when the fields had brought forth so abundant an increase - there seemed to be prosperity, there seemed to be peace, there seemed to be plenty. And one man at least rises up to say, as he puts his finger reverently to his lips, "God be praised, God has blessed us, God has caused his face to shine upon us". Whether you recognize it at once or not, I tell you this very quickly, this is a brave and a bold man who could do this sort of thing. He is rather unusual - for whether we are willing to admit it or not, prosperity has a way of blinding us - we have a way of becoming smug and complacent once good fortune seems to be our lot - and not everyone is honest enough, brave enough, bold enough, to stand up and say, "this favor that surrounds me, it is not of my making - behind it all is the unfailing and ever-supporting hand of God". It would have been easy for these people to say to themselves, "well it is high time that we have gotten the breaks". It would have been easy for these people to say to themselves, "aren't we an industrious people,

don't we dig and dig and sweat and toil? This is the natural result of our ingenuity of our industry." But one man at least stands up and says, "God - God has smiled upon us. This could never have happened if God had not been good to us". You know don't you, that usually when a man begins to talk like that he runs the risk of being unpopular. The kind of risk, if you please, that Rudyard Kipling ran when at that marvelous moment in Britian's history - when they were going to mark the jubilee of Queen Victoria - and they had this glorious celebration. For up to this time it could be quite properly said, This is Britain's shining hour". The sun, you see, never sets upon British soil. This is a great time in our history and so from every part of her realm they came to England - they would do homage to this _____ queen. And all the while Britian would remind herself of her strength and her prestige and her enviable position among the nations of the world. "Rudyard Kipling speak to us", they said, "you of all the English people crystallize our thinking and write us something for the occasion". And that Rudyard Kipling did - there were people who were shocked - there were people who were disappointed - but while he spoke of England's greatness, his mighty recessional ends with these words - as the shouting and the tumult dies, as all the illustrious representatives of Her Majesty and her power fade away - Rudyard Kipling shouts into the ears of the people that he loves - "Lord God of Hosts be with us yet, lest we forget". It was not a first _____ a popular note to be struck - but one can become so smug, one can become so complacent with prestige and position that he can fail to recognize even in that great moment that behind all of this is the Hand of God. Why is it, in our poverty we run the risk of becoming bitter - why is it, that in our plenty we run the risk of becoming ungrateful and unmindful of God's Blessing. Some wit reminds us, whether

it was an actual incident or not, that I cannot tell, but the truth is inherent in it just the same - There was a preacher who once said to his people, "Occasionally when the Pastoral Prayer is being made in behalf of the Congregation, I shall include in my prayer petitions in your behalf and if there are some of you who would like to be remembered in my Pastoral Prayer, or if you know of someone who ought to be remembered, just write it out on a piece of paper and hand it to me". And one day much to his surprise he received a piece of paper that read something like this - "Dear Pastor, please remember in your prayers a member of our Congregation who has become rich" - and the point is well taken. For in any hour of prosperity, peace or plenty, a man wittingly or unwittingly can become prone to forget the Hand of God. NOT THIS MAN - not this _____ . He rises up and he says, "God is merciful, God has blessed us, God has caused his face to shine upon us" - To his credit he said, "GOD".

That would be a good place to stop, wouldn't it? God is good to me - period. But this is one text where you dare not stop and this is one text where you cannot afford to stop in the middle. "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us" - but the text goes on - "that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." Some people, this is a lamentable thing to say, will recognize the smile of God's favor upon them and they will stop at that point. And I tell you the truth when I say that sometimes I become very uncomfortable when I am with people who will tell me without hesitation, that God has been good to them. They can say that sometimes I consider myself the most fortunate person on the face of the earth - it ought to delight the soul of any man to hear someone give God credit - but I say to you, if a man stops at that point he is denying himself what is intended

by God to be one of the most fruitful and blessed of all experiences, for he speaks aright who says not only this: "God is good to me", but who also says, "God is good to me and because He is good to me I consider myself obligated to be good to other people." No man has a right to ever consider himself simply as a recipient of God's favor - he must consider himself as a recipient who shares. If God is good to me, then God is good to me for only one purpose - that through me others may get some benefit of God's bounty. That's the idea of the Psalms - that's the note he strikes. "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations". For shame upon you, my friend, if you have ever permitted yourself to believe that you have a corner on God's favor. For shame upon you, if you have ever allowed yourself to think for one single minute that all the goodness that you enjoy in life - you may enjoy because God passes somebody else over in order to give you his undivided attention. Come Now - be confronted by the whole black facts of life - sometimes we have a way of thinking that we are God's favorite children and there are other folks in this world who may have to be content with a roll of a stepchild of God. You may think of them that way - but in the sight of God there is no such thing as a stepchild. "God be merciful unto me and bless me" - Go ahead God - that's what I want, that's what I need - but when you smile upon me, help me to understand that it is never at the expense of somebody else and when you do smile upon me smile upon me with a purpose in mind - that your benevolence should glow through me and through the lives of other people. I repeat, no man has a genuine religious experience who sees himself solely as a recipient of God's favor - but rather as a recipient who takes on another roll - he

becomes a sharer. If God's outstretched hand to me is never empty - if God places something in my hand - he does it only that what he gives me and what I become as a result of his charity shall prepare me as an instrument in His hands - by which to bless somebody else.

On this Sunday so near to Independence Day, I have catalogued for myself some of the things that taught me to believe that God has smiled upon America - we who declared our independence - we who said we would be a people upon the face of the earth. As one reads the pages of history he is duty bound to accept that here and there, on this page or in that page of history, there is sure and certain evidence of a smile of God's favor. Take it as a matter of geography, if you will. We do have a favorite position on the face of this earth with this mighty buffer, if you will, of the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the mighty buffer, if you will, of the Pacific on the other side. Almost, and I say it now to the credit side of the ledger, almost an island to ourselves. A place which has become for many people in the world a refuge, an asylum, a sanctuary - to which when they come in this quite spot, removed geographically from certain other parts of the world, they have been able to allow their noble dreams to reach fulfillment. I can honestly say, from the time I first crossed the Atlantic to this hour - and I hope as long as God gives me memory - whenever I think of the outstretched arm, the upstretched arm of that Dame Liberty standing there beckoning people into that Island called Manhattan - Come let me have the soil and the stain and the refuge of your shores - Come let them find a place here - that's what she shouts - and so there have been for many parts of the world a noble dream to reach fulfillment in this spot that perhaps might not have come _____ realization anywhere else.

I remember once back in 1947 when visiting in that glorious city called Prague, I sat with a group of people and I said, "I am disappointed (only an American tourist can be as bold as that to say to your host and to endeavor to take them to task) for I cannot understand, with this limited mind of mine, why Czechoslovakia should not be willing, enthusiastic to become part of Our Marshall Plan - promulgated back there in 1947 to enable the free world to ban together and to benefit from so much". And I said, "Why when I came to Prague I got off the train at Wilson Station - so great was your love for our World War I President - and I remember that when you fashioned for yourself a little republic after World War I, that news was first proclaimed from our Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. Come now, why do you turn your back - why do you hesitate to accept the suggestion of our Country?" And my host said to me quietly, with a greater degree of patience than he deserved to exercise, - "When you go back to your hotel room tonight if you have a map of the World, if you have a map of the United States, if you have a map of Europe - Look at them - find out for yourself where the United States is, and then see how great the distance is between the United States and Europe and the Iron Curtain - and then you look at your map of Europe and see just where Czechoslovakia lies along side the Russian border. It is so easy for you to think and to say and to believe what you do - but this is a case where distance becomes a blessing and prosperity itself becomes a very disparaging - almost a curse - even this matter of geographical location would be called a favorite thing for us."

And it so freshened my memory, as though it was yesterday, when I sat along the side of _____, one of the two woman jurist to go from France to the War Crimes Trials in Nurnberg, and she said, "It's easy for you to think and to believe and to preach what you do - but

we in France remember that if another World War comes Ours is the battle field - as it has been the sight of one nation after another to march hither and yon - and yours", she says, "is almost _____ soil".

One does not know what the future may have in store, but at least as far as the past is concerned - by virtue of geography, we have been spared so much. One thing from the political world and this thing called democracy that we cherish. Could it not be, my friend, that all of the schemes of Government on the face of the earth with all the weaknesses that become our system - is there any plan that is quite as close to the people as this democracy that we cherish - are we not fortunate?

I have told some of you before, I will say it to you again - when I think when my Father turned his back upon the East and set forth to face a brave new world - I thank God again and again that he kept going and his wrecklessness knew no peace until he came to these shores. So I say to myself somberly and gratefully - suppose he had stopped in Eastern Europe and I, his son, would be growing up in countries where freedom is only a word - and I say to you - next to the Grace of God made available to me through the Sacraments of Baptism, even if one now can say the same in one breath, I do not know of anything that I cherish quite so much as the fact as that I live where I live and I am born a free soul and I am given the privilege to dwell in the land that cherishes liberty and freedom. We are favored even as some of us today find ourselves strangely perturbed when we think of a Bishop of our Church whose mind and soul remain in tact but his body disintegrates because he is not free. And this is only one incident among so many. One is reminded to catalogue among the blessings of these United States of America our apparent prosperities. We are the only people on the face of the earth, to a degree, where it can be said that over-production becomes a vexing thing,

or where people are over-eating becomes a problem - when half of the world goes to bed hungry - then I think how I feel _____ and when I think how half of the world is in poverty - we are favored.

And then I must go marching on with this text: God is merciful, God has smiled upon us, God has allowed us these things - but then the text must be completed - these things are ours but through them and by them other people shall benefit and then I say to myself as I take my soul to task - as you should do also - "For shame upon us, if we who cherish so greatly political freedom should wait a hundred years to give _____ something more than second rate citizens - we who have received so much from the earth - for shame upon us - and when we debate in Congress, month after month after month, as to whether or not we shall take some of our surplus wheat and give it to India's starving millions" I shall not forget when as I took a ban of Americans for interview with that inattentive figure, the Red Dean of Canterbury, say what you will, but while we were there we were slightly impressed by the way his mind was closed to so much as he had adopted _____ Soviet Philosophy. And there was so much in me that came by rebuttal and I wanted to take him to task. Then when he reminded me that when the ship of the Free World laden with Spanish oranges sailed into the Irish Sea and dumped them there and then sailed into Liverpool and docked and there are children playing on the dock for whom a single orange would be an unobtainable luxury - There may be such a thing as price support, there may be such a thing as control, there must be such a thing as economic - but I know one thing, that here at a particular time in our history we have full and plenty - and I also know that we may call that a sign of God's favor - and at the same time I know that in other parts of the world there are people who do not have - and you cannot talk to

that man in India or China or Africa about price support and control. He only knows one thing - we have - and he is hungry.

God be merciful to us, bless us, cause your face to shine upon us - but don't you ever dare finish your prayer at that point - go on bravely and boldly - "God be merciful and bless us and cause your face to shine upon us that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

AMERICA BLESSED BY GOD - HAS AN OBLIGATION UNDER GOD.

RS/MP

AUGUST 24, 1958 - "HOW TO DEAL WITH RELIGIOUS DOUBT

The Sermon on this day which commemorates Saint Bartholomew the Apostle, is entitled "How To Deal With Religious Doubts". And the text is a portion of the 46th Verse of the 1st Chapter of The Gospel According to John - And he said - "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And Phillip saith unto him, Come and See."

August 24 - and the calendar of the church commemorates Saint Bartholomew, the Apostle. If I were to stop you individually and were to ask anyone of you - what do you know about Bartholomew - why should his name persist in the calendar of the Saints? It could be that you might be hardput to answer - it could be that some of you wouldn't even know that he was listed among the Twelve. One of the reasons, I suppose, why so little is known about him, as such, is the fact that he is one the same person as Nathanael. These are the same people - Nathanael Bartholomew. Another reason is this - he wasn't a great preacher, as such. We have no incident in the New Testament that he performed in the Name of Jesus Christ an outstanding miracle. Yet the name is there - and the life was lived - and the calendar of the church includes him on this Saint's Day. What might he speak to us? By what right should I to ask you to listen now, in this time, to a Sermon that comes out of the life and the spirit of a man called Bartholomew.

Well there is the text - an excellent point at which to begin - Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Phillip said, Come and see. Would you please keep that text in mind while I read to you another verse from this same chapter - only a few verses away - "And he said unto him, Rabbi thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel". What's happen - why this transformation? This is the story of a man with whom he would deal today. Why this change of attitude? On one hand having heard about Jesus Christ he said with an air of doubt and

cynicisms - "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth"? And now once he beholds the face of Jesus Christ he declares so positively - "Thou art the Son of God - Thou art the King of Israel". To the credit of Bartholomew - while he was a man who was inclined to doubt, he was, let it be said, an honest man. A man who was honest in his doubting - once he expresses himself he responds to an answer given to him - "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth"? - Well come and see. That's the first thing that a man ought to keep in mind when he deals with anyone who is inclined to doubt. You will not find Phillip here arguing with Bartholomew, or Nathanael if you want to call him that. We do well always to remember that Jesus Christ is never found at the end of an argument as such. And I think you have found it to be true already that when you come into this place you never find the Pastor of this Church challenging you to believe in God because he submits in your presence a list of arguments favoring God - but rather when you come to this place - when the Pastor comes to this Sacred Desk - you get what is in truth a recital of the experience of one man's heart and one Man's mind. This is what Jesus Christ means to me - and every Sermon, therefore, should be an echo and a re-echo of an experience and not so much the listing of a series of arguments. It would be a very healthy thing for most of us if sometime we were confronted by a plain unlitigated, unadulterated skeptic - who would not believe so easily all of these wonderful truths by which you and I live so dearly. And confronted by this skeptic he would allow us to know that he does not accept it. What then would you believe. For heaven's sake don't you dare begin to argue - because if he is a wit, and if he could be more intellectual than you, he could easily out-distance you on any argument, as such. When one comes to deal with a man of religious doubts his first lesson should not be an argument.

Take a page from the experience of Phillip as he speaks to Bartholomew - you wonder if any good thing could come out of Nazareth? Well I am not going to tell you and I'm not going to try to argue with you - you come and find out for yourself. It's an unfortunate thing that sometimes in the world of religion people take us to task for talking so much about faith - well come and try it. We are constrained to say to them that religion is a great adventure- and so it is - and that's a good word to use when you think of religion - a venture by faith - a venture in faith. And what's unusual about that? Those scientists who are not dedicated to the teaching of Jesus Christ some time ridicule us because we are always talking about faith. In my book, the last man in the world to ridicule me for talking by faith would be a scientist. For after all science itself is always based upon a "maybe". Whatever experiment is performed it is always performed on the basis of "maybe it will work and maybe it won't work" - we do not know but in our research we simply test and we try. What do they say - We Experiment.

All of us in America knew it - that perhaps there was one chance out of ten that that rocket would ever soar near the moon. But did that keep our scientists from saying that we will take the chance. William James in ~~his~~ "Will To Believe" - that magnificent book has a thought or two in which he says that all of life deals in "maybe" - "maybe it will and maybe it won't" but we go on trying don't we? What's the first thing to always keep in mind with anyone who comes to you with a religious doubt? Well come and see - try it - put it to the test. And to the everlasting credit of Bartholomew - having raised a doubt, he was willing to put this Jesus Christ to the test - "Come and See". Bartholomew came and he found out. Once he finds himself now in the presence of Christ, and having doubted - something takes place. Something always takes place when a man exposes himself to Jesus Christ - and that something was so

wonderful that the net result was this - Bartholomew says - "Thou art the Son of God - you are the King of Israel" - how could that happen? For a moment now as we deal with Bartholomew, take your eye away from him, as such, and look upon Jesus Christ, parenthetically speaking that's the way it ought always to be - for the life of any Christian is never the story of your life alone. The true story of the Christian is the story of Jesus Christ in that man's life. So now we look at Jesus Christ in the life of Bartholomew. The doubter comes. What is the master stroke now as used by Jesus Christ when he meets the man of doubt? The record has it that Jesus Christ says when he beheld Bartholomew for the first time - when he comes and he says - "AH an Israelite in whom there is no guile. Some one has well said that when Jesus Christ first approaches a human heart he may reach for any number of different keys by which to unlock that heart. When He dealt with Peter - the key that he used to unlock that heart was the key of sacrifice - "Come after me and carry a cross". To some folks it is the key of serenity and peace. "Come unto me - cast your burden upon me and I will give you rest". Ah, in this case, when he sees Bartholomew he unlocks the door of the heart of Bartholomew by the key of Praise saying to him some good things. His first word to Bartholomew, or Nathanael if you wish, - "An Israelite in whom there is no guile. How different from the approach that most of us make to someone who is not of our spirit - who does not think as we think - to someone who is different than we. So often when we come into the presence of that person - we're so mindful of all that is unpleasant, uncomfortable, unkind and ugly. Human nature has a way of blinding us sometime to the good in people. Especially in people who do not think as we think. But not so Jesus Christ. When he comes to this man who had expressed a doubt - he begins on the positive point -

you are a good man - and as soon as Jesus Christ said that, all the sharpness and the bluntness of that remark of Bartholomew, or Nathanael - "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth"? - takes on an entirely different light for me - for I am willing to believe that with Bartholomew the doubt that he had was the doubt that was born of humility - Nazareth was a wicked town - Nazareth is not good - could it be that the Promised One could come out of that place - it is not worthy. But be that as it may, how to deal with religious doubt - invite - let the person come and put it to the test - let him be exposed to Jesus Christ and notice now how Jesus Christ deals with a man who has doubted. He begins by accentuating the positive - A man whom there is no God.

Then the second thing to be seen as Jesus Christ deals with this man who comes to put him to the test. Jesus Christ says to Bartholomew "I have seen you before" - as much as to say, I know all about you. It's a healthy thing to keep that in mind when we think about God. Do you remember when we were in school - how they use to teach us the attributes of deity - omnipotent. God can do anything that God sees fit to do - on the presence there is no place from which we can seek God - He is everywhere - omnipotent - he sees everything - he knows everything. If you want to put God to the test you run the risk of seeing yourself exposed. Then as Nathanael comes to Jesus Christ, or Bartholomew, Jesus Christ says, "I have seen you before". How like God now. When he tells the man about the thing he had seen in his life - he put his finger on something that was very good. He says, "I saw you under the fig tree even before you came to talk to me - I saw you there". How like God to remind us of something good in our nature. For do you know what he was doing under the fig tree? Tradition has it that he was praying. How like God to be mindful of the good that characterizes our lives.

In the third place - as Jesus Christ deals with this man of religious doubt - he says to him - "I am going to tell you something - you have just called me the King of Israel - you have just called me the Son of God. I want to tell you this - that you will even see greater and more wonderful things than this - you will see the Son of Man and the Angels of Heaven descending and ascending from Heaven" - this greater blessing - and if you want to use it as a figure of speech it is simply Jesus Christ assuring a man. Now you have come - you who have doubt - you who have put me to the test now - you now who sees - let me assure you that you will even see greater things than you now behold. Whenever you think of Bartholomew, think of him in this way - a man who was not sure that God could come in Jesus Christ. A man who was not sure that God would make himself known in that way - but he was a man who was willing to put God to the test.

I am very much aware of the fact that as I speak to you, for the greater part, you are folks who have embraced the Christian Faith with hesitation and reservation. To a large degree, you have accepted all that is said about God - but may I ask you this question as I challenge the integrity of your soul - have you blindly accepted or have you accepted because you have put him to the test. God is - God is loved - God through Jesus Christ offers us forgiveness for our sins - Jesus Christ says, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives - give I unto you". The kind of peace the world cannot take away. There are so many promises that God has made through Jesus Christ - have you accepted them blindly or are they yours by conviction because you have put him to the test and you know them to be true. May I give you this healthy prescription when you are inclined to doubt, and I should hope that on occasion you would bring those doubts to Jesus Christ - doubts that spring from an honest mind - expose yourself to Him and you know

what will happen. The net result will be this - He will say to you - even a greater blessing than you now experience will be yours - for you have come and I have shown you - and what I show is far greater in the mind of man who can ever conceive. This is the life of Bertholomew, - one of the famous who wanted to be shown what he thought gave him a halo that will never grow dim.....

Raymond /Shaheen

mp

AUGUST 31, 1958 -SAMARITAN WITH A HALO

The Sermon is entitled "Samaritan With A Halo". It is based upon the Gospel for the day. The text, the 33rd Verse of the 10th Chapter of the Gospel According to Luke:

"But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed,
came where he was: and when he saw him, he
had compassion on him" ..

The Master Story Teller, Jesus, God's Great Galilean, was seeking to impress indelibly upon the minds of his hearers this wonderful truth of compassion. As he tells the story there is no question in your mind, nor mine, where the Halo will go. The Halo belongs to the Samaritan. He is but one of several characters who are part of the story. He remembers so well. It's one of the most unforgettable of all the Parables that appear on the pages of the New Testament. Ask any Sunday School youngster to name some of the Parables and he will name always among his list, invariably so, the Parable of The Good Samaritan.

It happened on the Jerusalem - Jericho Road. A man was victimized. There was a robber, and then three other people who loom upon the horizon. Three other people who represent all the types of people who travel on the highway of life. The Priest - The Levite - The Good Samaritan. And as the Master Story Teller tells the tale, he tells us that the Priest having seen the man who was victimized passes by on the other side - without comment. He says the Levite seeing the man victimized passes by on the other side - no comment. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was and when he saw him - then the comment of praise and commendation comes quickly to the lips of the Master Story Teller. This one now will be different. This man is grateful. This man will practice benevolence. The Halo will go to him. And as long as men can remember the pages from the Good Book - that Halo will be over the head of The

Good Samaritan. But why? But before I tell you why, or remind you of the answers to that question that you already have framed - let me tell you this about the priest and the Levite, and I would not dim the glory of the Halo for the Samaritan, one bit.

The Priest and the Levite were good men. While they did not get the Halo, none of us can say they were not good men. They were respected in the community. They were officers of the church. They loved God's House. In fact, it could be said, that perhaps nothing brought them quite as much joy as dealing with the things of God - in God's House, on God's Day. Ask anyone of them to name some portion of the Sacred Writing and the Priest and the Levite would always have an answer - and chances are it would be the right and correct answer too. They knew God's Law and they loved God's Temple. I think in all fairness I have a right to call them good men, decent men, honorable men. So good, so decent so honorable that they would feel very much at home in your pew - the place where you are seated right now in this Holy House - and you would delight in having them with you, too. So great was the respect that they enjoyed in the community. But none of them, neither one of them got the Halo. The Halo belonged to the Samaritan. Clearly and plainly - that's the way the record has it. But why? Why should so-called decent, good and honorable men be denied this lasting word of praise from the lips of Jesus Christ. Why should it go to the Samaritan, a half Jew. The answer could be like this. It was a Samaritan who saw past their indifference, to their thoughtlessness. The word indifference remains in our vocabulary as we deal with these men. Indifferent they were - they came - they saw - they passed by - indifferent to the place of one man's misery. Why were they indifferent? Why was it that he saw through their indifference - even to their thoughtlessness - so much so that he was constrained to

stop while they passed by. Oh, they had their reasons - they justified their indifference. After all didn't they have an appointment to keep. Chances are the Priest and the Levite were scheduled to appear in the Temple, and so they said, "I do not have time". They justified their indifference - good, decent, honorable men that they were by saying to themselves, "if I were to stop and the man is not dead, it could be that the robbers are using him as a decoy right now, and I run the risk of being involved in a _____ that would cost me my skin, perhaps." And so they justified what appears as their indifference by passing by on the other side. Or they could have justified their indifference by saying, "I become callous to this - this isn't the first time it has happened today and it won't be the last time it will happen today". For the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known as the "Bloody Path" - even to this day. H. B. Morton in one of his books when he deals with Palestine tells us that as late as in the early part of 1930s when he was traveling there, he was warned to get off of the Jerusalem - Jericho Road before night set in, else he ran the risk of being waylaid by robbers. The reputation continues, the situation exists, even to a time as late as that. And so having become callous to this type of misery they justified their indifference. This is not the first it has happened and it will happen again; and, furthermore, they justified their indifference by saying to themselves, "he should have known better - he has ~~no~~ one to blame but himself".

Good, decent, honorable men - that's the way they talk. And how do I know that's the way they talk? What right have I to use a sanctified imagination at this point and project these words into their minds. I have lived long enough with decent, good and honorable people to know that in all likelihood that's the way you and I might have reacted had we been there, at that time. The Halo went to the Samaritan - but the Priest

and the Levite were so-called good, decent, honorable people. But the Samaritan saw through their indifference, even thoughtlessness, that was cruel and lacked compassion. The Samaritan got the Halo because he saw beyond a situation to a soul - and I would say to myself that when the Priest and the Levite came to this particular place they simply saw the repetition of a situation. This had happen before, this was typical of that road, and it could well be, who knows, that the Priest and the Levite has sat on committees where they had discussed this very same situation. Maybe as the Priest went by he said to himself, "Well if that committee would only act on my recommendation" - or as he scratched his head he might have said to himself, "Maybe I should have added to my proposal that we build a hospital at the end of this road to guarantee some kind of illuviation for the misery that seems certain to exist". This was a situation and it was typical that people should be victimized and when the Priest and the Levit came on the Jerusalem-Jericho Road they were cognizant of a situation; but when the Samaritan came he was not so much aware of a situation as he was a soul. For, if you please, he saw beyond the situation to a soul. It is well to have committees - it is well that we should be made aware of situations - it is well that we should take action to do something about a situation - but that's not enough, if in the dealing with a situation a man becomes blind to the immediate need of a soul.

I am perfectly sympathetic to the young man who after some delay decided to come to his Pastor with his problem. He was willing to lay bare his soul. But he said, "Pastor, for God's sake, don't deal with me as a case - don't look at me as a situation - think of me as a person". For you see, it is always a risk when one looks at a case - ~~it is always~~

~~a risk when one looks at a case~~ - it is always a risk when one looks at a situation - in being able to look at it objectively. When the Samaritan came he went to him for he saw in the situation the immediate need of a man - a single man in misery. The Samaritan got the Halo for another reason, I think. For he saw beyond his own good fortune a man whose plight was misery. I would say to myself, that when the Priest and the Levite came, thinking people that they were, they said to themselves - "how fortunate am I - five minutes earlier I might have been there - how fortunate am I - I know enough not to come here alone, or at the most dangerous of these perilous hours - how lucky am I". And they had a right to say that - and I would not criticize them for thinking that way. And it's a salutary thing when any man can begin to call himself fortunate. But I tell you with all the ardor of my soul, it is only a half-step in the direction of God when a man simply recounts the reasons for his good fortune. To call myself blessed is only a half-step in the direction of God. For the Priest and the Levite considered themselves fortunate, but they still passed by on the other side. But the Samaritan, mark you, he got the Halo because recognizing his good fortune he said to himself, "I am better off than he, therefore, I am constrained to help - my good fortune compels me to stoop - he is half-dead, I have my health - his body is broken, mine is whole - they have taken his animal, his beast of burden, I have my donkey. I will let him ride on it - they have taken his money, I have - I will take care of him then". Notice the extravagance of love. He says to the innkeeper, "I will pay you now and if there is need to spend any more money, keep an account of it and when I see you again I will reimburse you". He saw through his own good fortune to another man's need and recognized his good fortune as an opportunity by which he could help somebody else. No wonder he wears the Halo - none of us could ever take it away from him.

I have live long enough, I have dealt enough with so-called good and decent people to be glad in my heart when I am able to hear them say - "God has been good to me" - And I am glad for any man who takes a half-step even in the direction of God - when he turns to him with a grateful heart - but this is only a half-step, my friend. If God is good to me, He is good to me for a purpose that through me and through my bounty, somebody else may benefit. I have heard so-called good, decent and honorable people say, "God is good to me, I am thankful" - and that's all they have ever said. I have heard so-called good, decent, honorable people say - "I have helped people but I feel I have helped them enough and there is a limit even to my compassion - I don't think anybody has a right to expect me to do anything more." Don't misunderstand me - while I don't deal out the Hallos - I think I can say this to you - that anyone who thinks and reasons that way, may never get one. But the man who did get the Hallo was the man who didn't see a situation - but he saw a soul. He couldn't allow himself to be indifferent as long as one man's misery is still in front of him.

BELoved you do not choose the people you meet on the highway of life nor are you always responsible to what may happen to other people - but in God's name you are responsible for what could happen to them through you once their situation is misery. We live in a day and age when for the most part, there isn't a single one of us who could not say - "I have never had it so good". You may run your thought in any direction. "I have never had it so good." Are you going to stop at that point or will you go one step farther and say - "God, since the situation for me is as good as it is - unleash the springs of my compassion and let somebody else benefit from my good fortune". As long as men breathe - as long as men can read -

there will always be the story of The Good Samaritan, and there will always be the Halo around his head and the finger of truth out of that Parable continues to point against you and against me and somehow it fits in judgment against us - you who have never had it so good - what about any man - any man - whom you meet who is less fortunate than you - whose lot could be better because of what you have. The Halo went to the Samaritan and Jesus said in one final word that requires no further comment from you nor from me - "GO - DO LIKEWISE".

RAYMOND SHAHLEN

Notations on a sermon - -

"Samaritan With a Halo" - as delivered in Saint Luke Church on Sept. 7:

Introduction: There is no question in our mind from the very beginning as to where the halo rightfully belongs. Master story teller that He was, our Blessed Lord depicts clearly that it is the Samaritan who stands out as the man with distinction, due to his compassion.

The halo rightfully belongs to the Samaritan because he stands out on three particular counts in contrast with the Priest and the Levite - -

- 1) He saw beyond their indifference to their heartlessness. Undoubtedly they could justify their indifference to their own satisfaction, but on the other side they were heartless.
- 2) He saw beyond a situation to the predicament of a single soul. There can be little question about it, the Priest and the Levite were quite conscious of the situation that existed on the Jericho Road. Presumably they had attended committee meetings and passed recommendations asking that the situation be remedied. There is virtue in this, but not enough to guarantee a halo! Always, the need of the individual soul must be met when that need is so apparent and so close. No resolution, however, noble, can substitute for an outstretched hand when needed most.
- 3) He saw beyond his own good fortune to an opportunity - - an opportunity to share at once with the person closest at hand. It is a good thing to say that once God has smiled upon me my fortune is great and good. This in itself, however, is but a half step in the direction toward God. What is further required is this: God has been good to me in order that I may be able to share. If my fortune is good, then I shall look upon it as an opportunity.

We may not be able to determine the situations that we may face as we travel along life's highway, nor may we be responsible to what happens to people before we arrive on the scene. However, in the name of the Christian God, we are held responsible to what happens to people through us once contact has been made.

Notations on the sermon - "A MAN NAMED MATTHEW" - preached September 21, 1958

Text: Matthew 9:9 - "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting in the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, follow me, and he arose, and followed him."

When one comes to deal with the fact that here is a man named Matthew who followed Jesus Christ, we are in duty bound first to recognize the character and the integrity of the leader.

I Let us immediately bring into proper focus the one who ^{Undiscouragable} does the inviting who invites another to follow. This is the portrait of THE UNDESCRIBABLE CHRIST. This is the title that comes so easily as one recognizes what happened before He confronted Matthew. The words of the text bear careful reading - - "And as Jesus passed from thence....". The question is, where had He been before and what had happened to Him there? The truth of the matter is that He had a very unpleasant experience. People who should have known better had given Him a hard time. Scribes and Pharisees, reared in the tradition of the Church, had turned upon Him with unwilling ears. He had just given God's best gift to a man; namely, the assurance of forgiveness. So-called good people had argued with Him on this score. Had Christ been as human as we are, He would have lost heart and thought to himself that it is a futile thing to invest God's best in humanity. Not so Jesus Christ. He turns from this episode only to try again.

^{Undiscouragable} THE UNDESCRIBABLE CHRIST, looking for a man, goes to AN UNSEEMLY PLACE - Capernaum - center of graft and corruption - about the last place in the world that you and I might want to look for a candidate for discipleship. II

^{Undiscouragable} THE UNDESCRIBABLE CHRIST goes to AN UNSEEMLY PLACE and invites an UNLIKELY SOUL to follow Him. Matthew was a publican. Publicans were despised. They were looked upon as turn-coats. They were not even allowed to present alms at the Temple. By the very nature of the work, here was one Jew bleeding another Jew to fill the coffers of a foreign and pagan power. Why could Christ, the undescrivable one, see such promise in this unlikely man? III

The words of the text bear careful reading - - Jesus Christ saw A MAN. He did not see a label. He did not see a situation. Probing the depth of a man's heart, He looked upon Matthew, not so much as one worthy to come but as one who could be made worthy to stay in His company if he should be willing to accept the role of disciple.

Granted Christ invites, the fact remains to be considered, what prompts a man to respond. Sooner or late, in most every one's life, he is confronted by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ does not give a variety of offers - the choice is a limited one - - follow me. That is all that Christ asks of any man; namely, the inclination to learn the disposition to follow.

Could it be that Matthew responded because, having had prior contact with Christ, he had made up his mind that his own past life was never meant for him? It could be that on the very day that Christ called him he had prayed "oh God, help me to make the break, help me to arise beyond this miserable life."

The story is not a new one. Christ has us on His calling list. When His eye is focused upon us, now easily will we follow? Matthew, without hesitation, accepts the challenge. As he followed, others learned of the Christ - his leader - through the Gospel that he wrote - The Gospel According to Matthew. Countless numbers of people have come into the Kingdom seeking the Christ that Matthew followed.

This is a parable for each of us. In the last great day, when the book of books is opened, how many names might appear there because they, observing our lives, have said, "we, too, want the Christ that you have seen fit to follow."

Sunday, September 28, 1958 -- "A Philosophy from Prison" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "A Philosophy from Prison". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the first verse of the 4th Chapter of Ephesians: I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord". What a chuckle that must have brought to the censor! He had been reading these things that ^{his} ~~this~~ prisoner had been sending out from his press for any number of years, but this is the first time he ever came across anything like that! And, understandably so, this was no doubt the first time he ever had a prisoner like the Apostle Paul. He chuckled to himself and perchance he passed along this from one to the other. "This is a good one. Look what he says -- I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord. -- That isn't what my book says, said the jailer. He is the prisoner of Nero. He has been an arbitrary

in our community. We have had our eye on him. We call him a trouble-maker, and we shall penalize him. This is the way the state deals with people of his type. He may call himself the prisoner of the Lord. We call him the prisoner of Nero. A strange lot, these Christians. A peculiar bunch." Presumably that is the way the censor dealt with it as this Letter to the Ephesians went across his desk.

I submit to you this morning Paul attaches this descriptive for himself, recognizing at once as you do that he is in jail, that he is a prisoner of the state. And so we can readily understand the censor's reaction. But here is this descriptive of Paul's -- I call myself a prisoner of the Lord. As we deal with it, we are privileged to come to an understanding of this insight into the mind and character of Paul. He who calls himself a prisoner of the Lord.

Once upon a time on that road to Damascus that awesome thing took place. Confronted by Jesus Christ, he recognizes the claim of God through Christ upon his life, and from that time onward he considered himself held in bondage by Jesus Christ. From that time onward he considers himself a possessed man. Some claim has been laid

upon him. He is no longer his own. He has been captured. Small wonder then that when he finds himself behind prison walls, he writes a letter to some people on the outside and he refers to himself as he understands himself -- as a prisoner of the Lord.

I submit to you this morning that behind any worthwhile life there has always been a compelling motive by which a man understands himself to be in bondage, either to something or to someone. Behind any man who has ever lived a worthwhile life there has been some claim on his life, something or some person who has mastered him. Take -- go into any field -- take a random shot now with me. Charles Darwin who has done perhaps as much in his field as any man in his time, whose contributions to his field are still recognized. Do you know that there was a long period in his life when he could work but two or three hours a day at the most, and yet he considered himself driven to that desk, compelled to take up this study or that study. He could not have done with it; he could not wash his hands from it. He was driven to it again, and again and again.

Some of us have been intrigued by Lord *Shaftesbury* of England, who perhaps in his day did more to raise the living conditions and the standards of the laboring class than any other man, who guided so well the laboring class revolution in England in the 19th Century. Again and again we are given to understand that he went back to this controversial issue because he could not have done with it. He was captured by a dream. Some claim had laid hold upon his soul and he could not ignore it. I remember as an impressionable lad reading the life of Abraham Lincoln, and of all of the things that made an impression upon me, this remains clearly: Once seeing that despicable (?) thing of human flesh being sold he said, If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard -- and there are some who believe that all the while he occupied the White House, he was pushed by this dream. All he did was towards that end.

Once I walked the street of that lovely university town, Princeton, New Jersey, almost rubbing shoulders with a man with the baggy trousers, turtle neck

sweater, bushy-haired man with that far-away look in his eyes -- Albert Einstein. And when you study that human's life, you will that fact that here was someone possessed by an idea, completely captured by the mathematical world and especially the mathematics of physics . Any man who has ever made a contribution of substantial worth has always been a man who was , claimed, possessed, captured by a noble idea, a dream, a thing or a person.

As valuable as any biography that the Christian can read today of contemporary men and women deals with the life of Albert Sweitzer. He/^{who} could be classified as an artist in any number of fields, turns his back upon Europe and America and ~~almost~~ buries himself in Africa. Why? Because he admits that he has been obsessed by the notion that for too long the white man had exploited the black, the time had come and perhaps this thing was upon his conscience and he at least one person would go to the dark man's continent and return the debt or fulfill an obligation. And there he remains in Africa because he is the prisoner of a noble dream,

No matter where you look, my friend, any man who is making a contribution of note is a man who is captured, possessed and claimed by a dream, an idea, an ideal, a thing or a person.

When I come to recognize the life of the Apostle Paul, who has done more for the cause of Christianity perhaps than any other person who has ever lived, outside of our Lord and Master, amid all kinds of perplexities, in the face of all kinds of shame and maltreatment, in the face of all kinds of abuse and scorn and ridicule, again and again and again he finds himself possessed and captured. "I am a prisoner of ~~the~~ Jesus Christ."

I ask quickly and arise to the point, my friend, what are the ideas in life that claim you? What are the noble dreams that possess your mind? Who is the leader who keeps you a prisoner to his cause? We foolishly sometimes say that we get ideas. We foolishly say sometimes that we use (?) ideas, but we don't. Ideas use us, and we become the instruments of ideas (?).

To keep your life from becoming monotonous, to keep your life from becoming senseless and without purpose, I ask you, to what are you held in bondage? Who captivates you?

For the Apostle Paul there was no question. "I am in bondage to Jesus Christ". Now this fascinates me for the moment. When a person is held captive by Jesus Christ, surely he must have a distinctive philosophy of life. He will begin to think differently; he will begin to act differently. Paul does not disappoint us. He calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and in the same sentence he shares with us his basic philosophy of life. Prisoner as he is, he shouts to us where we are: I beseech you -- as J. B. Phillips translates it -- to accept life with humility and patience and make allowances for each other. As a Christian this is his philosophy concerning life. First of all, he says, you accept it. That is to say, You begin at the point where you are right now.

My soul knows great anguish at times when under God I am privileged to be a pastor counselor to people, and I find that all too often we don't seem to get anywhere because the party or parties involved are always dealing with a world that isn't. They become disturbed by a world that was, and then they go on to the other extreme and they keep thinking of only a world that ought to be, and how different things should be and then they become

Robert Browning tell us the common problem -- yours, mine, everyone's -- is not to fancy what were fair in life (?), but finding first what is, then try to make it fair, up to our means.

He who is held captive by the mind of Christ must begin at that point. You recognize the situation as it is. You must accept the present hour. You may not have to keep it that way, and under God perhaps you should not keep it that way. But you will not be able to improve by ignoring the situation as it now is. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beg you that you accept life; that you accept life with humility.

Yea, He knows your soul and he knows mine. For presumably grateful as we are, there is a certain recess in every man's mind where he is prone to compare and to contrast his lot with somebody else's. And then he will say to himself, I have been short-changed. If I only had all that man has. How much more I could do with it. Look how he scorns the thing and plays prodigal with God's mercies. There is in each one of us the tendency to believe that we have been short changed. Says the Apostle Paul, Accept life and accept it with humility. God has not short-changed you.

I have been in Saint Luke Church long enough, I think now, that if I were to leave this sacred desk and to walk this center aisle, at almost every pew to which I would come I could stand and hesitate for a moment and scan each of you who sits in that particular place. And, I think I could put my finger upon some burden in your heart which seems especially grievous for you to bear. And each of you in your own way perhaps, given to a moment of human weakness, could cry out against life and cry out against fate and say, It has not been fair. And proudly you could rebel. The Apostle Paul with a basic Christian philosophy says, "Accept life, but accept it with humility."

In my heart -- our hearts -- I can still say that life is good, and God is good. There are certain things for which I can still be grateful for and not the least among them is the knowledge of Jesus Christ as my redeemer who saves me, an unworthy sinner.

Then says the Apostle Paul, I, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to accept life with humility and patience and also to make allowances for each other. It is so clearly seen, isn't it? If you are going to accept life, you will have to accept people, too. You can't live in a world without people, and there are all kinds of people in the world, and most of them have practically every kind of fault and weakness that makes up your character and mine. Says the Apostle Paul, as you live with people and as you deal with them, learn to make allowances for them. You may not condone their behavior. You may not hold it up as exemplary, but try to understand why they are the way they are, and then move (?) from that point.

Someone once said, and wisely so, I think, that if it was given to

to fully understand the make-up of any man's character, we might forgive him most everything and anything. This is basic Christian philosophy, fashioned and formulated by a man in prison who had time to think. He might have shouted out to us, Don't be kind; don't be good; look where it got me. And then he would shake that heavy chain upon his hand and he would rattle the chain upon his wrist. He is captivated by the dream of all dreams (??), the dream of Jesus Christ, who once it becomes a dream fades into reality. He said with a parting thought, Make allowances for other people even as I am constrained to remember how Christ has made an allowance for me.

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Notations from the sermon "A Philosophy from Prison" (Sunday, Sept. 28, 1958)

The sermon is based on the Epistle for the day. The text is the introductory verse in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians - - "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord....(and we do well to add the phrasing of the J. B. Phillips translation)....ask you to accept life with humility and patience and to make allowances for each other."

I, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD - what a chuckle that must have brought to the Censor. He had read a great deal of what some of the prisoners had written, but this was a new one. In the official log-book of the prison, he was listed as a prisoner of Nero. These Christians are a queer lot.

But as Paul uses the descriptive for himself, we gain an insight not only into his mind but into his character as well. Ever since that awesome moment on the Damascus Road, when he was confronted by Jesus Christ, he discovered anew the claim of God upon his life. Thus he has been living his days as one made captive, as one laid hold upon.

Now this should be understandable to us. Read the biography of any of the great and you will invariably discover that any man who has lived for anything more than self has been somewhat held captive, either by a great idea, an ideal, a person, or a thing. To be read at random - the lives of such men as Charles Darwin, Lord Shaftesbury, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein. Each of these men found themselves driven again and again in the pursuit of a dream or an ideal.

For our purpose this morning, what happens to a man and his thinking when he is laid hold upon by Jesus Christ? Paul adds quickly, following his descriptive for himself, what constitutes a basic philosophy.

ACCEPT LIFE - - Paul recognized the truth that despite all the fears and frustrations that he had to face daily, that the situation could never be improved by an unwillingness to accept, that is to recognize the existing situation. To get you some point beyond the present moment, we must begin where we are. I find that so often when counselling with people again and again there is the shadow boxing that takes place when folks, completely distraught by the past or the present, seem to focus their eyes entirely upon either what might have been or what now ought to be. The first and necessary step in the improvement of any situation is the disposition to accept or to recognize what actually exists. That, of course, does not necessarily mean that one condones or approves. It primarily means that one does not ignore.

WITH HUMILITY - - Paul adds these words so quickly. One must accept life in the spirit of humility and patience. Hidden in the recess of every man's mind is the inclination to feel that he has been short-changed. Each of us has his moments in which he believes that the good fortune that others receive they do not deserve, and the ill that may be our lot should never have been our misfortune. This can lead to a false exaltation of the ego. I think I have been Pastor of this congregation long enough to enable me to believe that if I were to leave this pulpit and walk down the center aisle of this church, I could pause at almost any pew and put my finger on this person or that who has received from life what appears to be a cruel and vicious blow. If a man is not

"A Philosophy from Prison"

held captive by the spirit of Jesus Christ, he would cry out against life and fate and grow bitter, but I say to you, whatever may be our sad state, each of us must be humble enough to recognize the glorious truth that God does not short-change any single soul, and that above all else, we who know Jesus Christ have already received the most wonderful experience possible to the soul of man.

TO MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR OTHERS - - ah, there you have it. If one is to accept life, then one must also accept people. There can be no living apart from people, and when we come to live with people we may discover that for the most part they have in degree or kind the basic weaknesses, faults, and failures that easily beset us. The only helpful way by which to live with people is to make an allowance for this thing. Someone has wisely said that if we really knew the inside of every man and could enter into some kind of appreciation for the storm and the stress and the strain upon that man's life from the outside, we might be able to forgive him almost anything.

THE CHRISTIAN LAID HOLD UPON by the spirit of Christ is aware of God's unfailing love, if this is what he wants at the hand of God. Therefore, with patience he deals lovingly with his fellow-man.

10/26/58

REFORMATION DAY - Worship in Lutheran Church

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With the coming of anything new there is always the opportunity for evaluation. That is precisely the kind of thing we have been trying to do for the past two Sunday Mornings and again today as we introduce the New Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal, even as we dedicated them today.

On that first Sunday when these hymn books were first placed in these pews, Pastor Wohlgemuth gave you an introductory thought or two concerning the worship experience. Last Sunday/^{morning}we thought about this particular pattern in this book - why is it that we worship the way we do? - What is the meaning of this worship experience? - And today, the last in this series of meditations on worship, fitting enough on Reformation Day - worship in the Protestant tradition.

Let me begin by telling you what I have heard said - Protestants don't know how to worship. I have not come to this desk to argue that point. I have not come to tell you that it is true, I have not come to tell you that the statement is incorrect - that I really do not know. But this I do know - I have heard it said often enough, Protestants don't know how to worship - that my soul has been vexed by it, my mind disturbed. And so I have given some serious thinking to this matter and much that I may share with you now is the result of the path that I have taken as a reaction to the statement - "Protestants don't know how to worship". Troubled, of course as we should be, by the thought - or we to believe by inference then that our Catholic cousins, our Catholic brethern, be they in the Western or Eastern Branch, that they are far superior to us when it comes to worship/^{ing}- do they outrun us - is their worshipful act more meaningful than the thing that you and I share

right now? I have gone to Roman Catholic Church. I have noticed with what reverence they do cross their threshold. I have noted, on occasion when I have been there, that there is no visiting among the people - if there is it is the exception - that is no visiting within the sacred precinct - and if ones lips are to move before the service begins, invariably the lips move because there is the utterance of a "Hail Mary" a _____, the moving of lips as they form words phrased in prayer. If while they are there they are talking - they are talking to God. And while I have been there, if I have noticed some movement within the Congregation - people stirring - it could be as I remember it now, that they are doing the stations of the cross - and as people come to worship some of them even then moving from one place to another, meditating upon this great redemptive act of Jesus Christ. It could be that they have been schooled and trained in the tradition - that whenever they go to church they are to think about God and what God has done for them - and all that happens then while they have the worship experience should become their response to this redemptive act of Jesus Christ.

Protestants don't know how to worship. If that should be true, how odd that it should be true, for wasn't it Martin Luther who struck the note about the universal priesthood of all believers. Wasn't it Martin Luther who said that every single one of us could be as a priest before the altar - that every single one of us, to all intent of purposes, could conduct his own little church service - if that should be true, then why is it that someone should be bold enough to say, whether right of wrong, that Protestants don't know how to worship.

I met him at Dayton again, I had^{not}/seen him in about ten years and when I saw him I remembered something that he had told me in the course of a conversation that we had together this decade ago when we were dis-

cussing any number of things, he said - "I would offer a _____ statement, within a hundred years catholicism in Europe will have run its course. It will no longer be the great influence in Christendom". That should be troubling to any man's soul, that anyone who takes the Name of Christ should have his influence, after a certain number of years, count for nothing or little, at any rate. On the other hand, I was greatly disturbed when I was reading in the Recovery of Worship, that most excellent book written by George Walter Fisk several decades ago - that I should not misquote him, I want to read this statement for you exactly as it appears in his book - "Unless the free churches" - and when he talks about free churches he is talking about the bulk of Protestantism - "develop a more convincing, more compelling and more satisfying worship - Protestantism is doomed". As much as to say, even Protestantism will have run its course and when that sad day should come to pass, it will be if Protestants don't know how to worship.

Now over against that statement, again I say whether true or not I do not argue - but over against that statement isn't it odd that it should ever be made at all - because we remember today in the Protestant Reformation Time, that it was Martin Luther who said that the worship experience should be fully understood as a corporate/^{thing}- that is that everybody present should be a part of it, everyone present should project himself into the thing and not something as is true in some Roman services where the priest almost stands as a solitary figure before the altar, chanting and intoning his part of the service with an occasional response by someone - but it looked as though this thing were beginning and ending with him.

Martin Luther, Chief of the Reformers said, "worship in the Protestant sense" - that is I am allowing those words to be placed into his mouth -

"worship in the Protestant sense should be something in which everyone participates". Congregational participation is the great mark that surrounds the Protestant Worship Service. To do that, you know what he did don't you? He took the Mass and translated it into the language of the people. No longer ^{did} ~~would~~ the scholarly and the learned alone appreciate the service - but now in their own tongue they could read it and in their own tongue they could find their part, and take thier part. And then he said, not only that when people lift their voices in ~~praise~~ ^{praise} when they sing - this should not be something for a select company, helpful and valuable as the service of the choir is, but anyone who comes to church should be allowed to sing. So Martin Luther gave himself to writing and to translating hymns. One of them that he wrote, sometimes referred to as the greatest of all hymns in Christendom was that wonderful _____ which we just sang. Now if this should be true for Protestant worship where there is congregational participation - why then should it ever be said that Protestants don't know how to worship? If Protestants are people who read their Bible and who are given direct access to those Bibles and allowed to pick them up and read them without any guidance, perhaps, helpful as it could be and yet they are free to take their Bibles - and if Martin Luther in the worship service in the Protestant tradition brought biblical balance into the service, why then should it ever be said that Protestants don't know how to worship? Could it be that sometimes when Protestants come to worship they lose sense of the holy - they lose sense of the ~~mi~~ mystical - that what they consider more important than anything else is the preaching of the sermon, or the listening to an anthem by the choir. Now don't misunderstand me - I hope that I will always be able to preach a sermon intellectually/ respectable and spiritually helpful whenever I come to this desk. I would charge as

the leader of the worship service those who participate in the part to give the best that they have in the rendition of their ministry Sunday by Sunday. But at the same time, if when you come to church the thing that means most to you should be something that the preacher has said, or something that the choir has sung - these in themselves, helpful as they may be, should not be the most meaningful thing that should occur here and now. Because in this tradition, we believe it to be so, this pulpit is not the center but the front of the Nave. The most important thing you see when you come to this place is not the pulpit but the Bible high and lifted up - nor do you gaze when you first come to this place upon the choir arrayed before you as though that was the most important thing. The most important thing when you come to worship should be the realization that Jesus Christ died upon the cross to forgive me of my sins - and if the choir sings, the choir sings in praise of that truth and if I preach, I preach to further declare it. The most important thing that should happen whenever you come to church is to concentrate upon the fact that God loves me - God gave his son to die for me. I am not here simply to inform you of this. I am here to suggest that you become inspired by the fact that you already know. I have not come here simply to explain God to you, I have come here to bare testimony to an experience that I have with God and when you come to worship, since worship in the Protestant sense is always to be a corporate thing, we assume and rightfully presuppose that you too have had an experience with God - that you too, know that Jesus Christ died to forgive you of your sins and because you know this to be true and I know this to be true all that happens here then is the declaration of praise, for that fact, the opening of our doors to receive the blessings that come from the sharing of the worship service. I have gone to any number of different places of worship in the ~~the~~ Protestant tradition. Let me say to you

right here now at once - any man who bows his head in worship, any man who falls upon his knees, wherever it may be, is at his noblest and at his best. You may not prefer the path that he's taking to the throne of God any more than he might not prefer the path that you and I take to the throne of God but wherever there is an act of worship anywhere on the part of any man - recognizing Almighty God - that man demands my respect and demands yours.

Now in this Protestant tradition there is a variety of paths that can be taken. I have gone to the simple Quaker meetinghouse - no altar, no stained glass windows, no choir, no sermon - for forty-five minutes we remained in silence, then a beloved _____ stood up and said a sentence or two about the breathing of God's Holy Spirit upon us and then we prayed the Lord's Prayer - remained in silence for about twelve minutes longer and then gradually the congregation went out and walked around in the quite of a spring-time Sabbath day in the burial grounds and then to their cars and away. Why was that service so meaningful - meaningful for the simple reason that everyone who came there already had an experience with God and this thing was a cool expression of what each of them felt. Beloved I would not stand as a prophet - but this I would say, if Protestantism is ever doomed it will be doomed because the people who claim the Name of Christ in the Protestant Tradition have bogged down in their worship experience. It would mean that when they have come together they are not concerned to talking with each other, they are more concerned with getting from the pulpit some picture of today. If when they come together they are more concerned in getting something pleasant rather than meditating upon God, and God's truth, with my whole heart I believe that if as Protestants when we come together on a Sunday morning we come together clearly, concise and complete picture of the

face of God - then we will have something that will multivate and
compel us to live like Christiens on a Monday Morning ~~and the~~ tomorrow
morning will be as effective as this Holy Hour is right now.

This I most certainly believe.

Raymond Sheheen

mp

The Sermon is based upon The Epistle for the day. It is entitled, "Christian Essentials". The Text, the 9th, 10th and 11th Verses of the First Chapter of the Letter to the Philippians:

"And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Parsonage life is ordinarily exceedingly interesting. In the almost two decades that we have enjoyed Parsonage Life - when we count the number of happy things that have happened to us, there is always a peculiar kind of radiance that falls upon that time in that post-war period when we seemed to have almost a steady stream of displaced people sitting at our table and sleeping under our roof. By the kindness of God, some 8 or 9 of them came, sometimes in little clusters of three, once 4, usually one at a time. Sometimes they stayed for six weeks - one stayed for a year and a half. I am reasonably certain that whatever good we were privileged to pour into their lives it can not be compared with the blessing that they brought to us. We learned ever so much from them and through them.

There was Alexander Kurilenko. He went out the back door as the Communist came in the front. And all that Alexander Kurilenko took with him from that spot was what he was wearing and what he had in the depths of his heart and in his mind.

There was Maria Simaitis, whose husband was a brilliant man and a dedicated man, because of principals he would never forsake, he wasted away until death's hour in a concentration camp. By the kindness of God she was able to come to this new world and brought with her - her adolescent sons, two of them.

There was Ernestine Krastin who was literally dumped on our door steps. The people who had sponsored her had become disillusioned and discouraged. There was so much they did not understand and they wanted to wash their hands of her - and so one day ~~she~~ we found her there. Fifty-nine years of age - and Ernestine stayed on and on, and on.

They taught us so much - and one of the things they taught us was an appreciation for what can be considered basic in life. An appreciation for what can be called the essentials - a new recognition of what a man must have if he will go on living another day. No matter how strange the last year, no matter how different the new path. I thought ever so often when I would remember Alexander Kurilenko - coming to an entirely new world, beginning life all over again - what now must he have when he had to live behind so much - of all that he would take with him, what would he not forsake.

There was a man who wrote a book - it had a single word for the title - Essentials. Do you know how he wrote the book? In truth he did not write the book, so many people with whom he talked - they wrote the book - for they were the substance of it and they were the character of it. They did not know what was in the back of his mind - but someday he knew he would write what they did share with him and whenever he would meet these people he would always get the conversation around to this point - whether he would phrase it for them or not, I do not know. But this was always the question in the back of his mind and which they would answer wittingly or unwittingly. What must a man have if he is to go on living - what is essential? After he had talked to a number of people to get enough samples he wrote his book. He says men must have three things to find life worthwhile - work, love and religion. In retrospect I see how true that was now to the lives of these people that we were able to touch - displaced as they were when they came to the new world.

Alexander Kurilenko was always so unhappy it seemed to me - until one day we found the very work for which he was fit. A new life began when he was able to pass from idleness to a useful occupation. He wanted to do something with his hands and there was always the barrier of language and we could not quite understand - and then one day we took him to a machine shop - this was it - and life now seemed to be ever so much more meaningful.

I remember Maria Simaitis who by that strange fate when she came to this world, the family she had tried to keep together so much in Europe was divided - they trucked her away somewhere in Virginia and added to her displacement - misplacement. Never meant for the particular roll that she had to serve in. She took with her her son Martin, her son Jerry was with us, and then as God was answering her very own prayer - as though God for one moment paid undivided attention to her - the family was reunited. I have never known perhaps such joy in any woman's eyes as when here in this new world, in this strange place, love finds full expression - they are together.

I remember Ernestine crossing from the Parsonage to our Little Chapel of the Good Shepherd, a most lovely spot, and there she would go and kneel and pray and when she came back there would be a radiance upon her face, honestly so - she had brought with her, her God - and her God here was an absolute necessity in her life, and to Him she would pray. On an occasion when her door was opened into her bedroom, I could see there by the bedstand the Bible. God be praised and God we thank. For that young son J _____ who said to me one time when we were going over the service for worship that he could better understand it - I read for him the Creed in English and he said, "But Pastor if you don't mind when I go to pray the Lord's Prayer I shall still pray it to myself in the language in which I was taught". He would go on living in a strange world, in a different world - but always religion, always to God to whom he could pray. And Alexander Kurilenko to go on living, always something that he could do with his hands. And Mrs. Simaitis - that her family could be together - love full and free.

There is the temptation to go on with this Sermon from that point but I shall not - and all that I have now said is simply _____ to the fact that for some of us ~~and~~ there must be some essentials that we dare not loose if we are to go on another day. When I read the Epistle for the day I thought of the Apostle Paul in jail - and while he was in jain he made the most of it - he used it as an opportunity to think and while he was there he was thinking about some of his friends on the outside and he thought about them as they were going their journey through life - and he must

have said to himself, "I wonder what they call essential - I wonder if they are traveling in life with a lot of excess baggage that they really don't need - I wonder if down deep down in their heart, as believers of the Lord Jesus Christ they are dealing with the essentials. No matter where life may take them - will they always have the essentials? So he wrote them a letter and this letter that he wrote, called the letter to the Church of Philippi, has its first chapter in which he thanks God for them and then he says I have been praying for you. When he mentioned them in prayer - he never prayed for anything else except what he considered an essential. Here are what the Apostle Paul considered essentials for Christian living - "This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God". Here is what man considers absolutely essential for the Christian journey through life:

1. No matter where you may go, if you claim the name of Christ, this you must have, love that abounds - that grows. One, I say it advisedly, dare not claim the name of Christian if he is not possessed by a growing love and I use that descriptive, a growing love. For one is amazed sometimes to discover people who have love but their love has ceased to grow - and love is _____ a growing edge - it has no such thing now by which it concerns itself with expanding and enlarging and expanding its border to influence more people. Says Apostle Paul - for a Christian he must have love, but it must be always a love that is growing. Let me tell you what I mean - I have met with some people who have told me either by what they have said or by either what I have read between the lines, that while they have love in their lives it is love that has reached a point and set up a barrier and beyond which they will not go. In some sad moments I have sat down even with parents and I have heard either the Father, or the Mother, say in all of their discouragement, in all of their disillusionment, "What more can I do, Pastor - look what I have done already for him - ~~but he never comes back~~ I don't care if he never comes back!

If a man wants the name of Christ, his love must never stop at that point where he says - "This I have done and here I will stop loving you. I have seen it oddly enough, and strangely enough, with people who at one time in their lives, and look each other in the eye and have made a promise not only to each other but also to God, in which they said - "I will love you - not as long as you are pleasing in my sight, not as long as you set a table for me, not as long as you keep the house tidy, not as long as you love me; but the promise has been made, I will love you until death comes". Yet I have met with people like that, who because of the bruises and the hurts and the terrible burden of life, they have said one or the other - "Pastor I can not go on any further, I have loved - but I cannot love beyond this point". Says the Apostle Paul, for one who would take the name of Christian, it is essential that love should always be on the growing edge, enlarging and expanding. I have known people who have belonged to churches, where they have said, "Pastor, I have already given, I have done so much I feel I have done enough, I can not go on any farther". They may be in a position to know what they are talking about and I will not sit in judgment upon them, only to add quickly that I remember that when Dr. _____ and I had a conversation - not long after the war years - and terribly fresh on my mind's eye was the recollection of ninety percent of Warsaw completely destroyed - travelling through that great city of Hamberg, when over night 40,000 people were killed - nothing but debris remained, some of it even to this day despite the marvel of the German minds and this reconstruction era. In the face of that Dr. _____ told me that he met any number of people who said - "I have already given to Lutheran World Action, how much longer do they expect us American Christians to go on helping the world's poor

and needy, I have done enough". I have loved enough is what they are saying.

I am not giving you the Gospel according to Shaheen this morning, I am not giving you the Gospel according to the Lutheran Church, I am giving you the Gospel according to the Holy Sacred Christian Tradition. I am giving you the Gospel according to the mind of Jesus Christ as echoed by the Apostle Paul who said - "This I pray for you, that your love may grow". Then says the Apostle Paul that this love should grow in knowledge and judgment and that's something that we sometimes overlook. We may exercise a love that's not wise, we may exercise a love that does not deal with all the facts involved in the situation. I once read the other day something that I hope I may not forget. Every man you meet is something of a variation of your own self. That's reason enough to go on loving him, isn't it - with all the secret sins I cherish, says the Apostle Paul, this too I consider a Christian Essential - one that love should always be there and a growing love - second, that you may approve things that are excellent. What does he mean by that? He means that it is absolutely essential for a Christian to always take his stand on behalf of the thing that is best - not second best - BEST.

Ever so frequent you know what we do - we pat ourselves on the back because we settle off with the things that are second best - quite decent in our eyes - never wondering perhaps whether or not it is fully acceptable to God - but at least we have made some progress. The Apostle Paul says for a Christian it is essential that you approve the thing that's excellent and take your stand on the side of that which is absolutely best. There are some people, and this is not said sarcastically, who honestly believe that their Christian conviction and their Christian faith and

their Christian life becomes a salutary thing if on a Sunday morning they come to church. This is good but there is even something better and something best beyond that and that's not only to come to church but to fully identify oneself with the on-going work of the Kingdom, beyond your place in a pew. It is good that someone should bring his child to Sunday School - something better and something perhaps best is that when he brings his child to Sunday School he too might be taught - he too might be willing to teach - he too might be willing to counsel. If I have time this morning, and the wisdom by which to do it, I would be daring enough to take the social ills of our day - not ~~in~~ a hundred years ago, but today - and I think I could show you how the cause of Jesus Christ suffers default where time and time again the contemporary Christian is satisfied to level off at a secondary point - where he takes his stand in behalf of that which is next best and forgets all the while that God is waiting for him to stand up courageously and bravely and say - This is the hour when the most excellent thing should be followed". Listen carefully, where is the man who is willing to say today - not too far away from where we live, where the struggle of the second rate citizen is taking place, finding expression right now on the classroom level - Where is the person who is willing to say that this is the best way by which to solve this problem - where any number of young people, both black and white, are being denied a year of instruction - a year in his life that never, never, comes back again - and yet there are some people who are willing to level off at that point - who hesitate to look for what is beyond that, and then having found it take their stand courageously for it.

There comes a time in a man's life when he may be making progress - he should never be satisfied by simply inching a - there comes a time

sometimes when the daring leap has to be made - if that were not so there might not have been a Protestant Reformation. Said the Apostle Paul, "This a Christian ought to consider an essential - to make certain that he is standing on the side of the thing that is best". Then he said, also, "This too should be a Christian Essential - that wherever he may be found, he ought to be found sincere". That is his word for it and that comes from the Greek - and that Greek word has an interesting conotation - it means something without an _____, something that has no wax in its make up, something that's pure. And a Christian ought to be a man who is given to pure motives and who is dynamic in his behavior because the intergity of his heart is sound - who always does the right thing for the right reason - but that kind of conduct should go on until the day of Jesus Christ. That means none of us reaching the sunset slope of life can ever say, "I have been good this far, I can take it easy from this point on. Says the Apostle Paul, "it is essential for a Christian to go on being absolutely sincere even to the day that Christ appears". And all of this is possible if one is filled by the Spirit of Christ. Now how does this thing come to a man if he wants to have Christian Essentials? Let me tell you, and I have lived long enough to find it out for myself, to have a love that is always at the growing edge, to always want to decide on the side of the thing that is best, to try to be without adulturation, pure. You can never do it by yourself - Never in God's name can you do it by yourself. The thing that is called an essential for the Christian becomes his as Jesus Christ gives it to him - and the sad thing is this that there aren't enough of us who are willing to ask Jesus Christ to give us what we need. We are content to ask him for what we may think we want. Says the Apostle

Paul, realist that he was, "These things essential for the Christian can be yours but you will have to get them through the mind and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Raymond Sheheen

mp

The Sermon based upon The Epistle Lesson for today is entitled "Colony of Heaven", and the text is the 20th Verse of the 3rd Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Philippians:

"For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ".

It is a matter of history that when Augustus became the first Emperor of Rome that he was confronted by a problem of great magnitude. Now this was the Roman Empire - it had been taken by force, this segment and that segment, each in turn had been conquered. It is one thing to take a people by force, it is another thing to keep those people in tact by a means, a method or a weapon other than a battalion. What now would he do? Augustus was exceedingly clever and most astute for he recognized the fact that his was an empire stretching from the North Sea to the Sahara Desert, from the Atlantic Ocean to the River Euphrates - a vast geographical expanse. But a greater concern was the fact that this area was covered by people who were so different - no section had its own laws and was so strangely different from the section elsewhere - their own political pattern, their own religion, their own order for society. What now could he do to manage all of these people wisely and well so that there would remain a Roman Empire? Clever man that he was, he sent certain people from Rome into all parts of his Empire and he said, "Here you will live", and then as though he was putting his finger on a map, he said to another group of people, "Here you will live", and he actually studded his entire Empire with little groups of men and women, citizens of Rome. And he said to them, "As long as you live here, as long as you live there, you will never live less than a Roman, no matter what the pattern of society maybe in the peoples round about, you must always maintain the glorious standard of Rome". "You will be in each of these places as a little colony of Rome."

The philosophy paid off magnificently. As the decades came and the decades went he was able to discover how the pattern of Rome was being established and

superimposed upon these people in all sections of his Empire. The little colony exerted its influence and constantly raised the standards of these people until by the time 212 A.D. _____ the great Empire was able to offer many people, other than their own, citizenship in the Roman Empire because they too caught the complexion, they too caught the accent.

The Apostle Paul in writing a letter to that Philippian Church must have remembered that his Father was a citizen of Rome, even though it was Jewish blood that was coursing through his veins. The Apostle Paul's Father must have been a man exemplary in character, so much so that the Emperor could say, "You stand for all that is near and dear to the mind of Rome, you have become worthy of citizenship - I now make you a Roman citizen". And that thing passed on to the son of that man, and the Apostle Paul in many a tight spot of his life escaped punishment because he could say, "I am a Roman Citizen".

So when the Apostle Paul wrote the Philippians a letter he said, "Do you know something," I think that's the way it must have occurred to him - "Do you know something - a Christian is meant to be a member of a colony, a colony of Heaven - and God through Christ intends him, no matter where he may live, to live up to the standards of the Christian living, regardless of how people behave around him who may not be Christian. The Christian is expected to remain faithful to the standards of the Christian Religion, and if you were to catalogue the Christian Church wouldn't you say that precisely - that's one way it can be put, that Christians are people who _____ the universe here and there, a handful of them who under God are expected to live according to the standard of Heaven itself. Paul's figure of speech can be interpreted in one of two ways. Now you may take your choice and you will have no difficulty whatsoever because the substance of truth is the same on either score. Sometimes this text is translated, "For our citizenship is in Heaven - I must so live in this world as one whose headquarters are in Heaven and as one who owes allegiance to God's Eternal Kingdom". Or if you do not translate it - "Our citizenship is in

Heaven" you may also translate it - "For our conversation is in Heaven" and that's implied - that one daily order of conduct on this earth is as though one were living in Heaven right now. This is what this text means to say - that a Christian's standard for living daily should never be sub-Christian but always as high as possible and wherever he should be found, regardless of the condition or circumstance he should live as a subject of God. I don't know why it is, but sometimes there is a great tendency for those of us who are Christians to have one standard for living on Sunday and when we are in Church and another standard on Monday, or when we may not be in Church. Could it be because we get fowled up by figures of speech, could it be that we allow figures of speech sometimes to mean what they ought not to mean. For instance, I am going to Church, I am coming from Church. As though by that figure of speech one would permit himself to think that he is only in Church when he goes to a certain place, at a certain time. Therefore, when he is not there and with those people his standard for living may be different. Says the Apostle Paul, "Our conversation", meaning our daily conduct anywhere and everywhere should be as though we are in Heaven. You make a mistake, my friend, if you think this is Saint Luke Church. It's always an interesting question that I propose for my Confirmation Class when we start to talk about Church - What is the Church? And quite frequently they get all bogged down with brick and mortar - quite frequently they think too much of the corner of Colesville Road and Highland Drive - and then I say to them, "Well what would happen to Saint Luke Church if by some strange fate this building would be demolished and levelled to the ground - where would Saint Luke Church be then?" Then it begins to dawn on them and they see it in the proper perspective that Saint Luke Church is people. Saint Luke Church people is people wherever those people are found and you do not have Saint Luke Church just when we come together as a congregation in one place. Saint Luke Church will be your tomorrow morning; at your desk, in the market place, in your home, on your way to whatever may occupy your attention tomorrow morning at 10:00 o'clock - and wherever you may be tomorrow morning as members of a Colony of Heaven.

The Apostle Paul would say, "Don't forget that figure of speech" - you are expected there and then to live as though you are in Heaven right now.

Do you know that Lynn Harold Hough, one of Methodism's greatest preachers of several generations ago, use to tell his hearers about a dear old lady who had a lavender and lace dress. It would hang in the closet and on Saturday she would look at it longingly and then come Sunday Morning she took it down and put it on and off she went to Church - and when she came back from Church she changed her clothing and the lavender and lace dress went back up in the closet and there it would hang until next Sunday Morning. Then Harold Hough said the sad thing was that that was a symbol of her religion - she had a lavender and lace dress religion that was brought out on a Sunday Morning and tucked back there on a Sunday Afternoon and there it stayed.

When the Emperor sent these people out from Rome he said, "You are expected to live as Roman citizens, not only while you are in the Capital City but no matter where you may go in this Empire at any time regardless of the condition or circumstance there and then you are still to live as a Roman Citizen". Under God we who take the name of Jesus Christ are expected to live as citizens of Heaven wherever we may be found at any time and regardless of the situation. Here's an interesting thing for you - do you know that there was a time in Great Britain where any man who entered military service was expected to always wear his uniform - whenever he donned clothing it was never to be anything except his uniform, for he must always remember no matter where he went, no matter where he was to be found, he was never less than a defender of his land - a protector of all the things that he cherished. You are applying the truth to yourself, are you? We who take the Name of Christ - no matter what we may do are expected to never live less than the Christian Religion embraces. AH, it's easy to do it here at this time and in this place and with one another. It's easy sometime for us to think God's thoughts here - it's easy even for us to sing hymns that we send heavenward and not even to think of the words, it's easy to do it.

The Colony of Heaven - the Colony that's found not only here but behind these doors as well. Let me give you a confession this morning - a confession from your Pastor to you. I have discovered on occasion that it's one thing for me to say certain things from this pulpit and you may listen and you may give assent to what I say - but I have discovered that even when Monday Night may come, or Tuesday Night or when I may meet with a group of people in this Congregation - and sometime during the week we will be confronted by some problem, whatever it may be there is the temptation either from within my soul or from you to level off at a standard that is less Christian than the thing that you and I say we believe right now - and yet if our Christian Religion is to be effective it must be a colony of Heaven no matter where we may be found and regardless of the issue that we have to face.

I have an obsession that I will tell you about. Under God I am obsessed to lead individuals to Jesus Christ - next to that I am obsessed with the notion that Saint Luke Church should be a vertical colony of Heaven. That this Congregation of believers should build up a great reservation of good will and compassion - that we should always deal with each other graciously, earnestly and tenderly - that we should conduct everything that God puts in front of us in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. I tell you without reservation and hesitation that as long as God gives me strength I have this consuming passion that this Congregation should be as near Heaven-wise as any on the face of this earth - for if we can't begin with a Congregation, what right have we to thing that we can begin anywhere else. If one who believes in Jesus Christ cannot live as though he is in God's presence - how then can we expect anybody else to live that way. The little boy was perfectly right when he was asked by his Sunday School teacher - "Where is Heaven?" When he replied, "Heaven is where people are as though God were there". Says the Apostle Paul - we who are members of the household of faith are expected to live as though we were citizens of Heaven now. There was another boy who came home from Sunday School and he ~~was~~ was asked what the lesson was about. He was too young to get certain things properly put in his mind - and he said we talked about Jesus' samples - Jesus's samples....no that

wasn't it - it was really a lesson on Jesus's disciples, but he had misunderstood the word, you see - but the meaning is the same for a disciple is a sample of Jesus Christ and haven't we the right to believe that when God sent Jesus Christ into the world he said - this is a sample. And haven't we the right to believe that when any single people comes forward in the Name of Jesus Christ that he should be as a sample. That's why as a Pastor of this Congregation I have no great fear for what lies ahead this week in this Congregation. God is looking at this Congregation and he says - you are a Colony of Heaven, I trust you to do my work, I trust you in the face of all that would be pagan and alien around to do the things that please me because you are my subjects - I trust this Congregation implicitly to exercise their own good judgment in the face of God as far as this Congregation is concerned - that no matter what we may do - do it as God were here. If a citizen of Rome was asked to live his life, no matter where he was as though the Emperor were right there, is it too much to expect followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to live his life as though God were right here? As though ~~He~~ were....

He Is.

Raymond Shaheen

MP

The Sermons for the Sunday mornings during Advent carry the general title, "ROAD TO BETHLEHEM". This morning's Sermon could be entitled, "Journey into Christmas". The text, a portion of the 15th Verse of the Second Chapter of the Gospel According To Luke.

"....the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us".

Tell me, my friend, isn't it true that whenever you think of Christmas you invariably think of a road or a journey? When one recalls that First Christmas, one sees the travelers, Mary and Joseph, on the way to Nazareth to Bethlehem. When one thinks of that First Christmas he sees the traveler, the wise men who come from afar. When one thinks of that First Christmas he sees shepherds who turn their backs upon the hill country and take to the road. You can not think of that First Christmas without thinking of a road, without thinking of a journey - and perhaps when you think of any number of Christmases in your life you see yourself on a road - taking a trip. Remember with what nostalgia you might recall that journey that you took when you were on the college campus that first year - you remember when wearing the uniform during the war years how you hoped and prayed that you could take a trip come Christmas - that you could make the journey home - or when you had that first job in the distant city and you could hardly wait until you could make that journey at Christmas time. Try as you will, no matter how you look at it, when you think of Christmas there is always a road - there is always a journey.

Beloved, at this time of the year the Church calls us at Advent time to mark the road that leads to Bethlehem. Advent is the making of a journey - a journey if you please into Christmas and as we mark these days we make the trip that we might come to Bethlehem. I say it very earnestly - if some of us are to find God, it may be that we will have to take ourselves from where we are and make a journey mentally or spiritually, if not geographically, to a certain place where we are confronted by

the fact of God. For what is Christmas, if it isn't this? God at a particular place and God at a particular time confronting man - and whenever that takes place, there is Bethlehem where God says, "Here I am - all that I am" - and for some of us we may have to get ourselves up from where we are and take to the road - at the end of which is God.

This text, ..."the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us", speaks so easily to our condition. The text, just naturally, unfolds itself and in this text there are three specific observations that each of us ought to make as he contemplates the journey into Christmas. You will notice "the shepherds said one to another, Let us go" - the journey into Christmas is never to be made by a man alone. The shepherds significantly enough, did not travel singly - they went as a company - they invited others to go with them. No man can keep Christmas by himself - no man can arrive at Bethlehem who journeys alone. You recall the manager scene don't you? Whenever you think of the manager scene you always see one and more persons - never less than two. Now this can be significant. It is Mary and Joseph. It is the shepherds saying one to another - "Let us go". It is wise men ^{who} ~~that~~ travel from afar. It is the angel who proclaims the birth of Christ who immediately is joined by ~~him~~ a company of the multitude of the Heavenly Host. Ah, I know what you are thinking - you're saying what about the innkeeper - isn't he mentioned all by himself - what about Herod - the wicked king - isn't he mention all by himself; and you are right. But you must also remember that the wicked Herod and the selfish innkeeper are not part of the Christmas Circle. Mentioned alone they might have traveled by themselves but they never arrived at the place where they could kneel before the Infant King. You cannot keep Christmas by yourself - you cannot journey the road to Bethlehem alone.

Observation No. 1 ..."the shepherds said one to another, Let us go to Bethlehem". One is reminded of the story of Roy L. Smith, who tells about a man just a few short weeks before Christmas, as he was even shopping for Christmas, had one of

life's most cruel and vicious blows struck against him - right before his very eyes the two people he loved most in this world were stricken and snuffed out. As he came back from the burial service he was heard to say "And Christmas is only a short way off"- I don't know how I can keep Christmas this year, because no man can keep Christmas alone". He spoke no truer words. This is not the end of this story - Shortly thereafter he went to his Pastor's office and with a voice filled with deep pain he told the Pastor how he could not see himself making the journey now into Christmas alone. Christmas was never to be kept by a man by himself. So he said Pastor this is what I want you to do - there must be any number of people in this same plight - make a list of the fatherless and the motherless, the widows and the widowers, that you know - and then come Christmas Eve I would like to mark the journey to Bethlehem with them. After dinner on Christmas Eve, he came to the home of the Pastor and he placed in his own car any number of gifts which he had purchased for these people, the list having been previously compiled - he invited the Pastor and the Pastor's wife to go along - they went from home to home on this glorious errand on Christmas Eve completing their ministry of mercy well after midnight. As he brought the Pastor and his wife again to their home he hesitated before he drove away - and he said, "Pastor I must thank you for helping me to save Christmas - for helping me to complete my journey into the heart of Christmas, he might just as well have said - for I knew very well I could never had made it alone. In speaking a language which most certainly the Pastor understood, he said, "Pastor, I felt that everytime I went to a home tonight where there was a child, and when I left that gift for that child, I felt as though it was my own daughter doing that very thing and her face must have smiled upon me from heaven above - she was there - and while we were traveling around together I never felt there were just three of us, I thought there were always four - you, your wife, myself and my loved one - she was there too and so I have kept Christmas by taking her along - I have kept Christmas by taking these other people in life along with me. No man can keep Christmas by himself. It is significant that the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go. The text speaks so easily to us - let us now go even unto Bethlehem. Once you put yourself on the road that leads to Bethlehem make up

your mind that you are going to keep the journey, that you wish to arrive at your rightful destination. Underline the word of the text, "even unto Bethlehem" all the way. When you make your journey into Christmas decide to go all the way into Christmas. The shepherds might have been tempted to stop anywhere in route and they could have found some mighty good excitement at that. It was a season of revelry - there was a great deal of rejoicing on every hand and it could have been that they could have found some people with a great deal more glamor with whom they could have trafficked before they got to Bethlehem. It could have been that they could have found some place far more attractive than that smelly stable. But Bethlehem was their destination - "...Let us go even unto Bethlehem". When you make your journey toward Christmas, go all the way. You might be tempted, my friend to stop at any one of the number of interesting points - just being with friends at Christmas time is a delightful enough thing, ~~xxxxxxxmightxxxxtemptedxxxxxxx~~ sharing the gifts that friends give to friends can be a very pleasant thing - you might be tempted to stop in your journey for Christmas at that point - the singing of a Christmas Carol and even in a sentimental fashion keeping Christmas can satisfy a certain need in your soul - but do not stop at anyone of these points. The journey into Christmas is never to be consummated until you arrive where you can see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face -

And that leads to the third observation "...and the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem to see this thing which has come to pass". There was something in Bethlehem that was to be seen and that something was no less than God. At the end of their journey - Jesus Christ. All of life, my friends, can be called a Bethlehem Road and there are many travelers on the way - the wisemen, the shepherds - they were not the only ones who headed toward Bethlehem - any number of people. But you can count on the fingers of one, or both, hands the people who when they got to Bethlehem and completed their journey - beheld the face of Jesus Christ.

With an uncomfortable quality possessing my soul, right now, I must make bold to tell you that there are even people who may associate themselves with so-called church people on the road through life and yet people in

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that company could even go to Bethlehem and still not see the face of Jesus Christ.

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see what God himself has put there for us"

Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat where have you been?
I've gone to London to visit the Queen

Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse under her chair.

In the presence of royalty to go chasing after things that creep and crawl. In the presence of a world made beautiful by the presence of Jesus Christ there can be those who travel even to a royal city and fail to see the radiance and the truth of His love. "Let us now go even to Bethlehem and see this thing which the Lord hath made known". There were those who were preparing a dramatic production to mark the feast of the Holy Nativity - they had rehearsed and rehearsed - and one of the things made perfectly plain to the backstage hands at this point all the lights in the auditorium go out - only one soft light is focused upon the infant in the crib. But the night when the production was staged someone forgot and all the lights went out, one could hear throughout the auditorium the loud whisper from the backstage - you "hey - ~~was~~ switched off the light on Jesus?" They can't see him. The object of the journey to Bethlehem is to see Jesus Christ. That's why God came to earth - that men should see God as he is. This now is our journey into Christmas - how fortunate we are that we know the road to take. How fortunate we are that we are told that in the making of a journey we should continue until we arrive. How fortunate we are that we have been instructed as to what it is that we should see when we get there. This is the meaning of Advent - to get us on the road that leads to Bethlehem - then shall the Christmas tide be glorious ~~and~~ ^{for} we who ~~are~~ ^{will} now take to the road ~~shall~~ want for nothing else except to see Jesus Christ.

God help me, as your Pastor, as your Shepherd - I shall pray earnestly that this Advent Tide, as never before, we who take to the road shall look longingly for Jesus Christ - then shall we keep Christmas - Christmas.

ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - Repentant Pilgrim

12/7/58

This is the second in a series of sermons based upon the general theme, "Road To Bethlehem". On this second Sunday in Advent there is this sub-title for today's sermon - "ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - Repentant Pilgrim". The text, the tenth verse of the fifth chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:

"For we must all appear before the judgment
seat of Christ...."

You may remember that last Sunday Morning we said, as we talked together on that First Sunday in Advent, that Advent in reality is a Journey into Christmas and that each of us does well to mark the path that leads to Bethlehem. This morning on this Second Sunday in Advent I would ask you to consider the fact that for the Christian there are always two Advents that must concern him. The first is the Advent that marks that first Christmas, how when Jesus Christ first came into the world. Let us think about it just for a minute. You may remember that the people who marked the Road to Bethlehem in that day were people who decided that that was the road they wanted to travel - that of all the roads that could be taken by choice they went Bethlehem-way. The Wise men said, "we will follow the Star" - The shepherds said, "We will turn our backs upon the hill country" - Herod did not choose to mark the path that ^{leads} to Bethlehem, nor did the innkeeper - and they who did not choose to mark the path that ^{led} ~~leads~~ to Bethlehem then remained, if you please, outside the Christmas circle. That's the first thing that one remembers when he recalls the First Advent - - that the people who travel the Bethlehem Road, then and there, did it as a matter of choice.

The second thing that one says to himself is, that when they got to Bethlehem they must have raised all kinds of questions - What do you

think of it? Could this be God? Why should God do the things this way? How will people receive Him? Where will He go? What's next? The people who went to Bethlehem travelled that road because they had chosen to travel it and when they got there marking the First Advent they were the ones who raised all kinds of questions.

Today on this Second Sunday in Advent I would remind you that there is to be a Second Advent. He who once came, will come again. In fact he spent so much of the remaining days of his first journey here ^{this} on/earth by telling people he would come again. He gave them one picture after another to indelibly mark upon the fabrics of their mind - "I will return" - that's the thing that you and I ought to remember today. The business of the Christian this morning is not to concern himself too much with the First Advent. Under God we ought to do some somber thinking about the Second Advent. He is coming - He will return - And it seems to be very clearly put for us if we take this text seriously from the Apostle Paul - that every road in life now becomes a new Bethlehem Road. That no matter what path a man may take, whether he chooses to take it or not, he will end up in front of God. For every one of us, therefore, at the journey's end is God. That could be established very clearly in our mind and there is a thought with which one ought to live - that we are wayfarers all, everyone of us a traveller and whatever the road ^{he} ~~you~~ may take at his journey's end will be God.

In the First Advent there were some people who decided that they would either go to Bethlehem or they wouldn't - and at the end of that Bethlehem was Christ. For those of us who are the ^{contemporary} ~~contemporary~~ pilgrims in life, at every mans journey's end is God - and this Second Advent will be different in this respect and while at the First Advent man might have raised a lot of questions - at the time of the Second Advent when

~~Jesus Christ comes, the question~~

Jesus Christ comes, the questions will be raised by God himself. Man will not have the last word. If judgment means anything at all, it means that God has the last word - if judgment means anything at all, it means that God raises the questions. Man stands there at journey's end only to give an account, to offer some kind of an answer or another, weak or strong as it may be - and the purpose of this Sermon, beloved, today is simply to ask each one of us to do some somber thinking in that area. That Jesus Christ is coming again and no matter what road we take in life we will be confronted by him and when that time comes of divine consultation, Jesus Christ will ask some questions. ~~and~~ And it could be that one of the things that might concern Him is this - whether you chose the road that you took, or whether you didn't. He will be interested in knowing the type of character we portrayed as we traveled the road in life - what kind of a traveler are you? With a Christian it should only be one answer - As I travel the road through life I will take upon myself the roll of the repentant pilgrim. After all isn't that the way you labeled yourself this morning. In this magnificent and meaningful liturgy of the Lutheran Church, isn't it Sunday by Sunday the way we put a caption over our souls - in the very first few minutes that we spend together in divine worship - what do we call ourselves - "We poor sinners confess unto Thee; that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against Thee in thought, word and deed" What is this hour in the week, this one hour out of many, if it isn't this? At least one moment on the journey when we take time out to see ourselves as we are - to read perhaps a little bit better the sign post in life and if under God as a Christian I might see more clearly the way to my destination. So for the Christian, one among many wayfarers in life, this must be his roll. I am a Repentant Pilgrim for none of us

can ever stand before God, we will simply kneel. None of us, perhaps, has a right to approach Him _____ that he says, "Come you have my hand and I will draw you near". And whenever that happens I still come into His presence as one who is not worthy.

It has been said that in the moment of judgment, if judgment is to be judgment, God has the last word and God raises the questions. At the beginning they said, "what do you think of it - what do you think of Jesus Christ in the First Advent"? I tell you this Morning as far as Jesus Christ is concerned it doesn't make much difference what you think. He is from all eternity - God ^{above} ~~at~~ Gods and Lord above Lords - He is from the very beginning intended to be your Redeemer. Christ rightful roll is established. That may not be a very important question, "What do you think of Jesus?" He will not rise nor fall according to your opinion, according to your judgment. The question of question is this - What will Jesus Christ think of me? This is the significant question in the Second Advent - in the return of Jesus Christ - what will he think of me. And I would say to myself, when confronted by God through Christ He will ask me some questions. One of them could be this - Quite different from the type of questions you might think he would raise. He might say to me: "How did you travel the road that brought you to Me. This is where you have ended, but how did you travel the road? How many people ~~were~~ did you touch? Did you by any chance travel the road as I traveled it? And then when He sits in judgment upon my soul, He may say to me, "Do you remember when I was on earth, how I traveled that road, the kind of people with whom I associated? This is the time when you answer the questions, you don't raise them and then you try to give Him an answer and you remember all that you read in the New Testament - How Jesus Christ traveled the

road when He was here - and you have to say to yourself - well when he traveled that road He took many a detour - he took many a detour in order to go and associate himself with the poor, the downtrod and the needy - the social, the political, the moral and the religious outcast - how time and again He detoured in order to go where they were. One of the questions He might put to me, He could put it to you too - How many detours did you encounter in life that you might ~~af~~ go off the beaten path to find people in need and to touch them in their condition and to alleviate their distress. You never thought that Jesus Christ could be interested in the detours in your life, did you? Well He isn't unless the detours could take you to a place where somebody's life could be made better because you were that way. Then He might say to me in that second coming and while you traveled the road, how well did you identify yourself with the suffering of other people? How many of their burdens did you take upon your ^{shoulder?} ~~manix~~ When I was there on earth I entered into so much of their suffering. I made myself a brother to every man who was in need. How hard and difficult has the journey been for you? Show Me the battle scars that have come to you because you identified yourself with some kind of a poor man's trouble. Wouldn't that be something now. If Jesus Christ were to say to me in the last day - give me no lily white soul, give me a soul that has been stained because it trafficked with all the misery of life. How many burdens have you carried that have been the burdens of other people? Who knows but what in this terrible hour of judgment of mankind, the one question that God might put to the white man is this - "What have you done with the black man's burden? Who knows that in this time of judgment ^{of} ~~that~~ all the questions that Christ might put to a man who is a Christian - What have you done with the burden of unbelief on the part

of countless numbers of people who have yet to read upon the face of Jesus Christ the lines of love. What have you done with that man's burden - we who enjoy so much. Jesus Christ might say to me - What have you done with the burden of the man in those great areas of the world where the per capita income is less than \$5.00 a month? And you in your fair North America, the average per capita income \$1800 a year? When He comes again He might put a question like that to me. You who travel so comfortably had no time to concern yourself with a man who never knew the comforts/^{that}you enjoyed. Sometimes I become a great deal impatient with what I read and the articles of the Christian Century and the other magazines that take Suburbia to task. And yet I who have come to Suburbia so recently must tell you I have just lived here three years and in those three years I have come to appreciate the fact that if the one condemnation against you and me could be raised sternly and severely, it could be this. We are a people who are willing to take most anything from life except suffering and inconvenience. We do not ask to become wealthy in life, No, we simply want some kind of security that goes uninterrupted from day to day. We will not, perhaps, attempt to fight some man's problem in the far corners of the world, we only ask that He allow me to live my life quietly and peacefully where I am. I may not be worried over so much about committing great sin - God you don't need to worry about me on that score - but for Heaven's sake save me from all the ordinary unpleasantness in life.

On the last great day Jesus Christ may say to me as I travel the road - Would you ever enter into another man's suffering? How many burdens did you help anybody else to carry - or did you only ask of one thing in life - let me travel uninterruptedly. So you thought Christmas was the time of the year when you wondered what you would do

about Jesus - you thought Christmas was the time, perhaps, when people had a right to say, "Let's put Christ back in Christmas - let's remember that Christmas is the birthday of Jesus". - and you thought that maybe this was the time of the year when we had to pay more attention to what we would do to Jesus.

Advant this year, if it never meant it for me before is going to remind me that there is a Second Advent. The question of questions in that area will be - what will Jesus Christ do with me - what will Jesus Christ think of me? It may drive me to my knees more often - it may make me lift my eyes beyond my own horizon to some folks who are so far down deep that they can't see the Star that has never lost my horizon.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ - you can not escape it, my friends. At the end of your journey is God - What will He think of you when you get there??????

Raymond Shaheen